Ananda Varta

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Ananda Varta

(Joyful Message)

A quarterly presenting the divine life and teachings of
SRI ANANDAMAYI MA and the various aspects of
Universal Dharma

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ĀNANDA VĀRTĀ welcomes contributions on the life and teachings of Ma and reflections and personal experiences of Ma's devotees and admirers. Articles on religious and philosophical subjects as well on lives of saints and sages of all countries and all times are also invited. Articles should as far as practicable be typed with double spacing and on one side of the page.

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Ananda Varta

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The Eternal, the Ātman—
Itself pilgrim and path of Immortality
Self-contained—THAT is all in One.

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You Are That

In property and prosperity surely no peace. So, in what can peace be found? I am the very embodiment of Peace, embodiment of Wisdom—I am Consciousness. Until merged in this innermost sense of life. where is Peace? In order to find your own Self, you must focus light on yourself. How lovely!

* * *

This body (Sri MA) always advises: Become an explorer of Eternity, not a drifter into mortality. Strike out along the path of Deathlessness! Bring to light—You are imperishable, immortal.

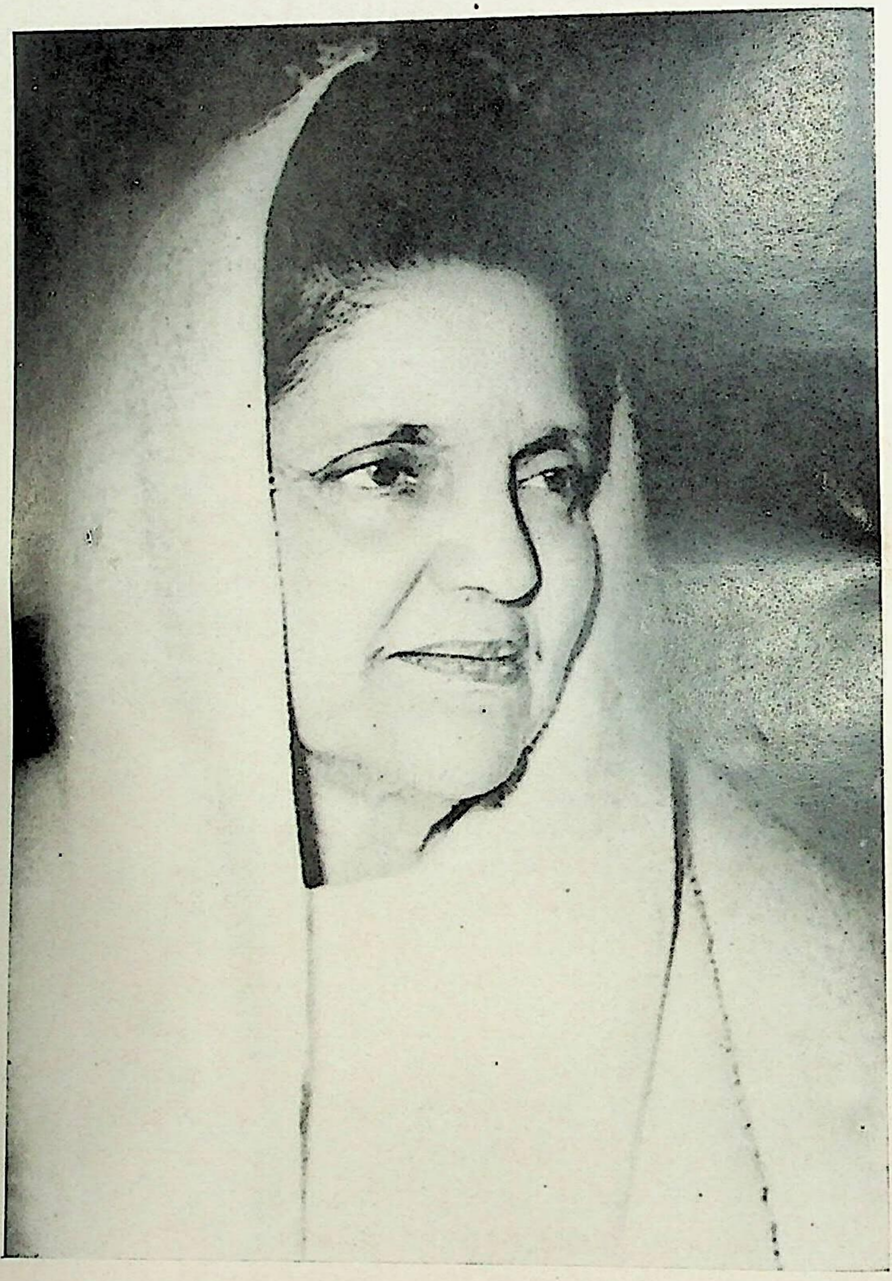
* * *

Inside a flower are seeds that come to view only when it blossoms. Or just as inside a seed always exists the tree, so also within you dwells Divinity. Through sādhanā occurs the blossoming forth—that is, on being able to destroy the obscuring veil, right then and there glowing beaming the Self-Effulgent. As the whole and complete tree is contained in the seed, just so the Divine in its Fullness is enthroned within you as You.

* * *

The human being is characterized by wants. Contemplate only want—hence obtain only want. So what's to be done? Contemplate Self-Fullness; otherwise emptiness, wrong action, frustration, misfortune, death. Within Itself solely That as Itself. Whether in guise of coming-going or of Being-as-Self, One alone Is. I, yes, I verily Ātmā-Rāma. Now! to be ensphered in all-Knowingness. Naught but You, You, You alone. You everywhere, in everything. Further—You indeed the Absolute in Itself. In the endless many solely One, He, She, am solely I Myself.

—Sri Anandamayi Ma



MĀTRI VĀṆI

(Dictated by Sri Ma as letters in response to devotees' requests for personal advice and guidance.)

THE body's tendencies and the distressed condition of the mind will have to be changed radically. By one's own strength everything pertaining to one's spiritual practice will have to be attended to fully and perfectly, so that the action of one's true nature, of one's self may be awakened. God's mercy and grace stream down incessantly. Try hard to keep your vessel not upside down, but the right way up—in other words facing upwards towards THAT. Whether experiencing want and emptiness or satisfaction and fulness, at all times it is He, you yourself ; endeavour to remain fully aware of this. This is also in the line of *tapasyā*. Don't think you are without support. He who has given you shelter is constantly with you in the shape of religious exercises and actions. Just following the rules mechanically like a puppet will not do. Of course, to become a marionette in the Lord's hand is good, but He Himself as Reality-directed action, having become evident in every vein and artery, in the very marrow of your bones, will take you in His direction at the auspicious moment. Never allow any opening for depression or dejection. Keeping the flag of hope flying, full of joy remain wedded to your present practice. Become filled with divine ecstasy steeped in its delight. The universe is in fact an embodiment of *ānanda*. The pilgrimage that has for its goal *paramānanda* (supreme joy)—this is real bliss.

Body, mind and speech must firmly adhere to truth—for the revelation of God who is truth, for the revelation of one's own true Being. To perform action is one thing and "to be" quite another. Action has to be performed for the revelation of the essential nature of action—a revelation that puts an end to non-revelation. For this reason one must until then be engrossed in practice aiming at what IS—in meditation, japa and the like—in the attempt to contemplate, to ponder over THAT. Ever absorbed in this, speak only as much as absolutely necessary. Remain consecrated to Truth. You, who are vowed to this path, should as far as possible express in refined language when speaking. Endeavour to divert the current of the body's outward turned activity inwards ; by what expedient ? By trying to keep the body fully engaged in God-centred activity. In order to become free from the mind's distress and anguish, from the scourge of want, a human being has to aspire to become established in his true nature.

* * *

The atmosphere there is congenial to keeping the mind at the feet of the Lord—all action must be done well ! Your health is good—what joy ! The activity of mind and senses must be guided towards practice aiming at God, so that the ultimate, sublime Goal of the pilgrims—of ascetics, sādhakas—may be attained. Yogic practice must enter the yogic current and develop into Mahāyoga.

* * *

Constant remembrance of God ! In the ashram of the householder service must be done with the awareness that all are manifestations of God.

Whatever Bhagavān ordains has to be obeyed. Wherever He may keep you try to let your mind be engrossed in japa and dhyāna. Therein lies the way to success and real peace.

* * *

For the practice of japa and the remembrance of God no special guidance of a Guru is needed. Remembrance and contemplation of God, study of spiritual books and similar practices are indeed what a human being has to engage in. Keep your mind on the Eternal.

* * *

What Ma says has to be carried out. Man should pray for God-realization since this is the prayer prompted by his true nature.

* * *

Do not be unhappy. Ma is always close to you, inside as well as outside. There is only one Ātmā. Try to remain absorbed in the Name and in meditation with this one thought. The path that leads to peace and joy is the one to be adopted.

* * *

Ma is always with you. Keep your body fit. Try to focus on the Divine in all circumstances of life. Whatever you do — walking, eating, lying down — endeavour to remember God. If you practise sādhanā inwardly — in your heart of hearts — you will in due course automatically become a sādhaka also outwardly. We all have ātmik relationship.

* * *

For a sādhaka all places are God's place ; it is not necessary to stay in India. One is born in a particular country as the result of one's own desires in former births.

To discover Vrindāvana, the eternal heaven of Love Divine in one's heart, this is indeed a state of real achievement. In order to have such an experience people go to Vrindāvana.

* * *

Whether anyone in your environment thinks of God or not, you yourself must make a sustained effort to the limit of your power to remember Him at all times in your heart and mind.

Be eager to progress on the path. The more intense your desire to obtain God's grace and to achieve your goal, the more will your feeling that you are going backwards recede. A human being must never allow his gaze to be directed downwards. Always gaze upwards in the direction of God.

* * *

Līlās

Srimoni

Is it true that for many lives
I have looked for YOU,
Tell me that I shall find you soon
For courage is leaving me,
Or perhaps YOU will be the hunter,
Then it will be the end.

Mataji : This state cannot be understood; because to understand[1] means to stand under a new burden, that's why.

Question : If by understanding one only increases the load on one's head, why do people study at all ?

Mataji : Who ! you have not understood. The world is based on duality and to understand duality it is necessary to study. This body indulges in this kind of incoherent talk because you have not taught Her anything. What is said in your Scriptures namely "roots above and branches below" (*ūrdhvamūlam, adhaḥśākham*) means that the brain is the root, it is the organ of understanding. Just as water has to be given at the root of the tree, so the head is the place of understanding. There indeed lies the capacity to grasp everything. This is why this body says, look you have understood one thing, but is not what you understood previously. In a very special way understanding grows by degrees. Although worldly knowledge and spiritual knowledge are different, yet being one at the root, both have to be grasped by the brain. To understand the second one means to take on yet another load. By going beyond understanding (which means standing under a load) there will be true comprehension. So long as the *triputi*, i.e. the division between knowledge, knower and knowing has not been dissolved, the real THING cannot be grasped. The ONE is ever self-revealed.

Question : Why has it been said that reciting all the śāstras again and again is better than understanding ? ("*Āvrittiḥ sarva-sāstrāṇām bodhādapi garīyasī* ?

Mataji : This holds good at one particular stage only. Reading is not done just for the sake of reading. By repeated reading the real essence is discovered. By continued study and reflection the root-cause of things can be grasped. But of course reading is not superior to enlightenment. That is why I say it is a particular stage.

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[1] *Bhoja* to understand and also *bhoja* load, burden,

Question : What is the best path, the one of knowledge or self-inquiry, or the path of devotion, or the path of selfless action ?

Mataji : The same path is not for all. Whatever one's Guru prescribes is the best, although the Goal to be reached is one.

Question : Is there such a thing as mantraśakti (mantric power) ?

Mataji : There is and it does indeed act. The action produced by uttering a mantra is definite.

Question : Is it necessary to pronounce the mantra correctly ?

Mataji : At certain stages clear and correct intonation will produce the desired result. However, if someone pronounces incorrectly with deep devotion, this also will bear fruit. Intense devotion produces results. But in order to obtain the full and complete benefit both are necessary—correct pronunciation and intonation as well as profound devotion. Nilmani please relate the story of "*jagat tipāya*" !

Nilmani now related the following story : "A Vaiṣṇava devotee used to say "*Jagat tipāya* Śrī Kṛṣṇāya *Govindāya namaḥ*" instead of "*Jagat dhitāya Śrī Kṛṣṇāya Govindāya namaḥ*" when performing his daily pūjā. Inspite of this he experienced horripilation, thrills, tears of joy and Śrī Kṛṣṇa's darśana every time. One day, a guest who was a saṃnyāsī pointed out his mistake and told him he should recite "*Jagat dhitāya*" instead of "*jagat tipāya*'. Accordingly the bhakta changed the word but he did not feel Śrī Kṛṣṇa's presence any more and thus became very sad. A few days later he confided his plight to another Vaiṣṇava sādhu who came to visit him. The sādhu asked. ' Well, what did you mean when you said '*Jagat tipāya*' ? The devotee replied." '*Jagat tipāya*' means that Śrī Kṛṣṇa has covered the whole world as an ant hill covers the earth. In this ant hill in the shape of Śrī Kṛṣṇa I live, free, from worries. "While explaining this he felt the touch of Śrī Kṛṣṇa's body and tears of bliss rolled down his checks. The sādhu therefore advised him to stick to his original way of reciting the mantra and then the devotee again as before, experienced all the indications of the Lord's presence."

Mataji: Neverthess, if the pronunciation is correct and devotion profound, then only will the full and complete result be experienced. The devotee in question was somewhat incomplete and therefore when he said the correct word "*jagatdhitāya*" he could not sustain the vision of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. If there is melting through devotion or burning—whatever you may say—then Truth will certainly stand revealed. On the path of love there will be melting and on the path of knowledge burning by the fire of discrimination. By either method Reality will ultimately be revealed. When everything has been fully melted there will undoubtedly be full Realization.

Mantra[1] means that which delivers the mind. But in the higgledy-piggledy language of this little girl, 'mantra' means '*man tor*'—the mind is Thine. That is to say : He whose name you repeat, the mind becomes His. Have you understood ?

Here Mataji broke out into ringing laughter and everybody present joined in spontaneously,

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[1] *A play upon words* : *Man* mind, *trān* deliverance.

Question : Without practising japa or meditation, is it possible to achieve everything by simply engarging in kīrtana ?

Mataji : THERE—everything is possible. By the protracted repetition of God's name everything may come about.

Question : When engaged in kīrtana, the mind does not become restless. But why do all kinds of thoughts crop up when one performs japa ?

Mataji : Kīrtana is done collectively. Moreover melody, rhythm and words are all in harmony.

(At that moment a devotee requested Ma to speak in Hindi, which She did.)

The simple explanation is that all sing the name with the same tune, rhythm and words. It is the nature of the mind to cling to what is delightful. This is why the mind remains concentrated on the kīrtana. There are of course people who are to concentrate also on japa. According to their temperament and predisposition (*saṃskāra*) people feel interested either in japa or in kīrtana.

Question : Can a human being attain to liberation through kīrtana ?

Mataji : If one is able to proceed in exactly the right manner, everything can be achieved by the name. God Himself manifests as the name, the *akṣara*[1] (indestructible). To keep company with the Name means to keep company with God. It is His very nature to reveal Himself. Therefore Nāma-kīrtana can certainly help to take one right to the end.

Question : Some people attain to peace by the continued repetition of the Name. Will they be able to remain at peace at the critical moment ?

Mataji : Yes, definitely they will.

Question : Even though the Lord is not one's personal friend and companion as in the case of Arjuna, is it possible to tread the path of selfless Karmayoga ?

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[1] *akṣara* means letter of the alphabet or syllable as well as indestructible.

Mataji : Under God's reign everything is possible.

Question : Why does God lavish His grace on certain persons ?

Mataji : God's grace descends on all without exception. Grace manifests in many different ways. According to the manner in which any one desires God, God bestows His grace in that particular way. Whatever object anyone covets, God's grace comes to him as the enjoyment of this very object. The grace of the fulfilment of one's worldly desires is one type of grace. Another kind of grace opens the path to immortality. All humans are recipients of grace. Just as a mother gives to her children different kinds of food according to their need and digestive power—barley water to one, fried rice to the other, a sweet dish to the third and so on. Similarly various types of grace are received in the world. To some it comes as kindness or compassion, to others as restraint or punishment, to yet others as the opportunity to rule or as the annihilation of the results of one's actions.

Question : Why is one moved to tears when listening to religious discourses ?

Mataji : This is excellent. God is your Self, the Life of your heart. Separation from Him calls forth weeping, in other words tears of love. From the ordinary point of view it is very fortunate and to be welcomed if tears come. Even if not due to genuine pangs of separation.

Question : Have the consequences of one's actions to be experienced in keeping with one's tendencies and predispositions (*saṃskāra*) ?

Mataji : Yes, so long as that great fire has not been lit one has to enjoy and suffer them.

Question : By what means can that fire be lit ?

Mataji : Contemplation of THAT, concentration on the Real is one way. Yet another method is satsang, to seek the company of pilgrims on the Path.

MATRI UPADESHAMRITA

(Mātri Upadeshāmrita, "the Nectar of Mother's Teaching", comprises excerpts from various sources of Sri Ma's spiritual instructions on selected subjccts.)

On Praṇāma

Question : What is the right way of doing *praṇāma* ?*

Mataji : When doing *praṇāma* to a deity or living saint or mahātmā, first have *darśana* of his whole figure. Start with the feet and let your eyes wander right up to the head while inhaling slowly. Imagine that together with the breath you are absorbing power into yourself from Him to whom you are bowing. Then let your gaze descend slowly again to the feet while exhaling; at the same time offer yourself to God with all that is in you, good and bad, try to pour yourself out completely, without reserve. When your head touches the feet of the deity or saint, his power enters your head. The head is said to be the root of the human being. When his hand is put on your head as you touch his feet, power is transmitted to you through his fingers.

* * *

To do *praṇāma* means to dedicate ourself to one's *Iṣṭa* or to God with all that constitutes one's nature at the time, be it desirable or undesirable, one's virtues, vices, capacities, shortcomings—everything; to offer one's whole being at His feet. Then, purified by His touch, to receive *oneself* back, as it were. as His *prasāda*.

* * *

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* Obeisance. It is done either by kneeling and touching the ground with one's forehead, or by lying on the ground full length, face downwards.

Praṇāma is done to God alone, never to a person, and therefore can be done anywhere at all, for He is all-pervading.

* * *

To do *praṇāma* means to pour oneself out at His feet, to become closely bound to them and thereby united to Him, to become His, who alone IS.

* * *

Whenever *praṇāma* is being done there is without fail, a give and take of power. The qualities of the person to whom one does obeisance—be they good or bad—are transmitted to the one who bows, regardless of whether he offers salutation from his heart or merely as an outward gesture. Therefore, whenever you bow down before one spiritually advanced, irrespective of whether you do so with real faith and reverence or not, by virtue of the very act of saluting him, something will flow out from him to you. When one does *praṇāma* to one's parents it is the expression of genuine love and respect. To bow down to them is therefore beneficial.

Someone asked: Suppose one does obeisance to one who apparently is a great saint but in reality a wicked person, it therefore will have an adverse influence on one's character. How is one to save oneself from this ?

Mataji: By Regarding whomever one salutes as the Supreme Being. Everyone, be he good or bad is but a manifestation of Him ; if you remember this and do *praṇāma* to the ONE alone, in whatever guise, no harm can come to you.

Question: So then how can the evil consequences of bowing to a wicked person be averted ?

Mataji: By bowing to the Supreme Being alone. *Praṇāma* must always be done with this attitude of mind.

To do *praṇāma* means to put one's head where it should be—at the feet of God. His lotus feet are everywhere and therefore one may do obeisance everywhere, remembering the feet of the Lord. To do *praṇāma* means to open oneself to the Divine Power that is always streaming down on everyone. Only one usually shuts oneself away from it. To do *praṇāma* means to give one's mind, one's I-ness to Him, to surrender oneself to the ONE, so that there should be only HE and not you. Dedicate yourself to Him without holding back anything. with all you possess, your virtues as well as your shortcomings and faults. While doing *praṇāma* one receives His Power into oneself with the intaking of breath, and when exhaling one should feel that one is breathing out the I-ness and remain as long as possible in *kumbhaka.*[1] When doing obeisance to a living person or a *vigraha,*[2] one should always look at the object of one's reverence first, so as to receive the *adhikāra* (the right and capacity) to do *praṇāma.*

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[1] *Kumbhaka*—suspension of breath.

[2] *Vigraha*—concrete external presence as form. An image consecrated through mantras or the adoration of the worshipper becomes the Deity Itself.

In Association with Sri Ma Anandamayi

Amulya K. Datta Gupta

(Translated from Bengali, A. V., May 1954.)

(Sri Amulya Datta Gupta was professor of Law in Dacca University in the 1930 and met Mataji for the first time in 1931. He then enjoyed the rare good fortune of spending a whole year in unbroken association with Mataji, including private conversations with Her for two or three hours daily. This close association was interrupted when Mataji left Dacca for the north-west after the 1932 *Janmotsava.*

Later, on the insistent advice of Sachikanta Ghosh, Assistant Commissioner of Income Tax, who became a close devotee of Mataji in the company of Prof. Datta Gupta, he was persuaded to note down his invaluable conversations with Mataji, keeping as far as he could to Mataji's own words. In due course whenever he enjoyed Mataji's darṣana in later years, (after partition he settled in Varanasi near the Āśram) he used to jot down all the important events and conversations with Her in his diary.

We are deeply indebted to him, as his records constitute a priceless supplement to Gurupriya Didi's Diary, through which Mataji's official movements are being published in Bengali.

The first volume of "*Sri Sri Anandamayi Prasaṅga,*' covering the first years of Prof. Datta Gupta's association with Mataji was published in Dacca in 1938 and a few years later also a second volume. His subsequent *articles* have been appearing in *Ānanda Vārtā* from 1954 onwards in Bengali and Hindi and continue to this day. He passed away at Kashi a few years ago. His daughter was a teacher and office-bearer of Sri Anandamayi Kanyapith at Varanasi for several years.)

* * *

A Sleepless Night

Ramna Ashram, Dacca,
Saturday, April 20th, 1946.

I had heard that the ladies would sing kīrtana for the whole night in the presence of Sri MA. But from Ma's attitude I understood that inspite of the kīrtana, Ma would also converse with us. Consequently, instead of loitering in the Ashram compound that evening, I went home early for a quick meal and then returned to the Ashram. There were several others already present there, including Jatin, Manmohan, Birendā[1], and others.

On arriving at the Ashram, I found Ma sitting on the veranda of the Smriti Mandir with Birendā and others seated below Her. I went and sat down on the steps close to Her. Various subjects came up for discussion. It was Birendā who was doing most of the talking. At this juncture a relative of mine, Jatindra C. Majumdar arrived. Ma pointed to him, saying : "This Babaji has a problem" and simultaneously glanced towards me, I said, "Yes Ma, Jatin's question is : Does everything happen by predestination in this world or is God free to act independantly ?"

Birendā said : "These are the perennial questions of philosophy. If we do not acknowledge that everything is predestined we do injustice to God's sovereignity, again if we own that everything happens according to destiny, where is God's absolute freedom ? So there is really no solution to this problem.

Mataji : There is a condition in which one sees that everything happens as pre-ordained. Then there is another level of existence where it is perceived that nothing is predetermined. Here the abounding mercy of the Lord upsets every rule. It all depends on the stage at which one happens to be at any particular time.

Birendā : Quite so. There is no state of existence that can be considered as permanent.

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[1] Sri Birendra Chandra Mukherji was the eldest brother of Sri Gurupriya Devi. He was then Principal of Haraganga College at Munshiganj, Dacca District. Later he became Principal of Jagannath Kishore College at Purulia. He is now no more.

Mataji : Some people term whatever we perceive in this world as *māyā*. They refuse to accept the variety and diversity found in the world. They assert that only the eternal *Brahman* really exists and that everything we behold is due to *māyā*. But others look upon the variety and diversity of the universe as different manifestations of the Lord. Yet others maintain that the parts and the whole both exist side by side.

Birendā : I refer to all this as due to different states of existence. So there is nothing permanent about it.

Mataji : But you cannot maintain such a stand, because your own Śāstras speak of a state where there is no conflict and no controversy. When attaining to a state where these disappear completely, there cannot be any hidden conflict or doubt within you. In truth, there is indeed a state of existence where all confusion automatically vanishes. This is a permanent state.

Birendā did not appreciate these highly philosophical discussions. I could notice this from his attitude. He was not permitting Ma to enlarge on any subject. We know that if we enter into an argument with Ma, She stops speaking. This is exactly what She did this time also—She remained sitting in silence.

Birendā continued : "Ma, our days are getting numbered. Our faculties are weakening, our eyesight is failing. This is bound to happen ; it is nothing to feel sorry about. Time will surely cause our bodies to age. We have nothing to look forward to. Our only enjoyment now is to remember the past. So I am recollecting the days in Shahbagh. What a wonderfull time we spent there ! Days and nights passed in ecstasy. We paid no heed to storm or rain. All the twenty-four hours we could think of you only. Of course, you yourself induced such a state.

But today ? I cannot imagine what a condition I have now reached ! Your memory seems to be on the point of extinction within myself. Formerly I had never touched your feet when doing *praṇāma*. Even when offering flowers at your feet, I placed them on the ground. This was my habit. But this same 'me' touched your feet the other day although this is now strictly forbidden. This shows how my previous remembrance has almost lapsed.

I recall today my first meeting with you. My father wrote to me, "We have now chanced upon a wonderful Mother who is the Mother of the Universe in person." In reply I wrote to my father, "Happy to learn you have succeeded in finding a Mother. But World-mothers cannot be spotted so easily." However, before going to Dacca I bought a *śārī*, so that I could offer something to the Goddess Mother. After reaching, I started for Shahbagh with the *śārī*. My brother Nandu, my sister Khukuni (Gurupriya) and my father were then staying in Shahbagh. Nandu wanted to return home. On reaching Shahbagh, I saw something marvellous. Nandu was holding one of your hands and Bholanath the other ; and you were laughing hilariously and trying to jump into the pond nearby. Afterwards I heard that on seeing me approach, you were trying to hide in the water. Anyway, I duly presented the sari to you, then bathed in the pond and sat down for my morning prayers By that time you had left. In my prayers I could no longer concentrate on my *Iṣṭa* because you had usurped his place. On finishing my meditation, I came to the foot of the stairs of the dance hall and did *praṇāma* to you. You than said something to me which I remember to this day, namely : At that time you saw what there was to see, later you did not see it anymore, and now having come here, you see it again. Everything in the world thus comes and goes. As if She had penetrated my innermost thoughts, Ma then continued : "Baba, know for ceatain that the Almighty may occasionally place you into difficulty and danger, but never does He allow you to sink entirely."

Sri Sri Ma had been listening to all these recollections with a smiling face and sometimes nodding in agreement. Birendā's mode of speaking was delightful, one could not help being amused.

Birendā started again : "I was then as if intoxicated. After a light meal in the morning, I used to leave my home and go to Shahbagh. The main meal there was just boiled rice, potatoes and a little ghi. We used to offer this to Ma and then partake of the *prasāda*. One morning I was sitting in front of the boiled rice with my eyes shut, offering it to Ma. On finishing I opened my eyes, only to behold Ma standing in front of me with Her hand outstretched. With a wonderful smile, She said : "Baba, will you not give me a little ?" So I fed Her. What a delightful time we had in those days !"

After resting a while, Birendā continued : "I shall now relate an incident that took place in Raipur (near Dehradun). I had gone there in my holidays. Ma's health was not good at that time. Naresh Chakravarti then stayed in Raipur. One day Ma pointed to me and said to Naresh Babu : "This is your Guru from a previous birth. "On hearing this the simple-minded Naresh Babu drove me nearly crazy by addressing me as "Gurudeva, Gurudeva." I looked at Ma and noticed that She was laughing and I realized that Ma was enjoying a joke at my cost. So I started looking for an opportunity to retaliate. It soon occurred, We were all sitting before Ma, who was on a raised dais while we were below, Ma's feet were hanging down At this juncture Naresh Babu went to offer *praṇāma* to Ma who immediately withdrew Her feet and at crosslegged on the dais. The incident was over in a split second. Naresh Badu felt somewhat frustrated because he had not succeeded to touch Ma's feet. I thought this was my golden opportunity to take revenge on Ma. I said to Naresh Babu : "My son, don't you understand why Ma withdrew Her feet ? Simply to let you know that your place is not at Her feet but on Her lap !" In childlike faith, Naresh Babu exclaimed : "Is this so Gurudeva ? May I really sit in Ma's lap ?" I gave him permission ; and Naresh Babu with his bulky body went and sat on the lap of Ma who was not well. So you can well imagine Ma's condition ! I mentally kept on telling Her : Will you again fabricate disciples for me and embarras me like this ?" Finally I realized Ma's predicament and so I said to Naresh Babu : "My son, enough is enough, now come down from Ma's lap !" On hearing Birendā's story, Ma broke out ringing laughter, not to speak of our own merriment.

These and similar conversations had taken us to about 4 a. m. Meanwhile the ladies were continually singing the holy name in the kīrtan-room. Without taking any rest they had sung non-stop practically through the whole night. Even though Ma was not in their midst, there seemed to be no lack of enthusiasm on their part. The heavens above were resounding in tune with their singing. Ma said : "Now let me go to them !" We at once whole-heartedly agreed since they had come to sing kīrtan all night to be in Ma's presence. We did not consider it right to withhold Ma from them any longer, so we went outside and stood in the field while Sri Sri Ma went inside to sing with the ladies.

The night was coming to an end. Fleecy clouds were chasing one another in the sky. A cool morning breeze was blowing over our bodies. We stood in the field in semi-darkness. Birendā said : "I was not keen to discuss metaphysics today, so I deliberately switched on to old incidents which had a homely touch. How sweet was the Mātri Līlā we enjoyed in those days ! And nowadays what a high metaphysical posture has been adopted by Ma ! I find it intolerable to listen to these transcendental topics, and I no longer enjoy the sweet and gentle motherly touch."

"I shall relate to you the events of another day. We were then travelling from Simla to Solan where the Raja of Solan was performing a *Nāma Yajña.* We had been invited and were accompanying Ma to this place in full strength. It grew dark by the time we reached Solan. On arrival, the Simla devotees at once started singing the holy name. I was asked to arrange for food to be served to the devotees. The dining hall was at some distance from the place where the kīrtan was being performed. Throughout the night the devotees were singing and I was taking them in small batches to have their meal. In this way nearly all who participated had been fed. At the end only the elders were sitting in the dining hall. By that time it started raining in torrents. Sri Sri Ma was seated on Her *āsana* in the Kīrtan. Due to the violent storm raging the devotees in the dining hall were unable to return to the kīrtan after their meal. To pass the time I was relating old incidents of Shahbagh. The Simla devotees had only recently met Ma. Consequently, while I was telling various stories illustrating Ma's omniscience, they seemed unable to appreciate what I said. One of the new devotees exclaimed : "Biren Babu, I shall believe all you are trying to tell us if Ma appears here in our midst just now." His words hurt me deeply. I at once retorted : 'If I have been speaking the truth Ma will certainly arrive here at this very moment. "No sooner had I uttered these words than we all saw Ma who had arrived inspite of getting soaked in the torrential rain."

Facing Birendā, I had been listening with rapt attention all this while. I suddenly happened to glance aside and noticed a lady with Her face hidden by her veil, standing at some distance. Her face was not visible because of the veil. Moreover the light in the field was too dim to recognise anyone. But I started looking intently and it seemed to me that it was Ma who had come. I shouted loud'y, "Birendā, Ma has come !" At my words everybody's attention became focussed on Ma and they started exclaiming joyously. We knelt on the ground to perform our *praṇāmas* to Ma. She did not speak a word but at once reentered the Kīrtan room and sat on the raised dais. All of us went and stood at the entrance.

How extraordinarily beautiful Ma looked in the electric light of the room ! She was clad in a saffron *śārī* with embroidered borders and ends. The saffron colour round Her face was being reflected on it, causing Her to resemble a bright flame emanating from a smokeless fire. Ma sat in front, and rocking gently from side to side was singing with an utterly sweet and melodious vocie : "*Kṛṣṇa Keśava, Kṛṣṇa Keśava pāhi māṃ, Rāma Rāghava, Rāma Rāghava rakṣa māṃ.*" Greatly inspired all the ladies repeated each line in chorus after Ma. From their flushed faces and the joyous sound emanating from their throats, it appeared as if by dint of their night-long devoted singing, they had succeeded in invoking into their midst the Lord of the *yajña*, Nārāyaṇa Himself. Indeed, Ma's divine countenance and voice did not appear to belong to this world. We kept gazing at Ma with unblinking eyes and listening entranced to Her singing. Any regret that we were harbouring over the fact that we could not behold Ma in our midst as in olden days was wiped away and effaced in a moment by the tender mercy of Ma's līlā.

Soon after, the morning dawned. The kīrtan ended. On former occasions Sri Sri Ma had usually bathed in the pond together with the ladies after an all night session. But this time, as the water was not quite clean, Ma devised a new scheme. She put some water into a brass vessel, immersed in it leaves from the five trees of our Panchavati and asked all present to be sprinkled with the water. Ma remarked that this water was equal to Gaṅgājal. She also said that whatever water remained after sprinkling on everyone's head and body, should be poured into the root of the trees of the Panchavati, so that nobody's feet could touch the water. This was done. After receiving some *Prasāda* we returned home. In spite of having kept awake all night, nore of us felt even the slightest fatigue or weariness.

* * *

Although I had heard from various people about what had transpired in connexion with dīkṣā (initiation) on the occasion of the last *Gurupūrṇimā* day, I was most keen to learn of this first hand from Ma's own mouth. Consequently when the reading of the Scriptures ended today at 11 a.m. during satsang, I asked Her point blank : "Ma, I have not yet had the chance of hearing from your own lips about the events that took place during the recent *Gurupūrṇimā*.

Ma (laughing) : Oh, you refer to all that ? It is nothing very special. One night, two or three days prior to *Gurupūrṇimā*. I noticed that some persons had arrived and were standing behind me. I was busy conversing with others in front of me, but I was well aware of these new arrivals. One of them was this body's (Ma's) elder paternal cousin. He had died long ago. He used to be a doctor and was very serious-minded. When he married for the second time, this body (Mā) must have been about eleven or twelve years old. I did not even know him very well. That night he approached this body, saying : "Please, give me something", that is, he meant : "Give me initiation by mantra." I told him : "This body does not normally initiate any body." In reply, he pointed to the people present before me and said : "If any of these persons who are here with you will write a mantra on a bel leaf and will let you touch it, this will be quite sufficient for the purpose." Thus he himself explained of his own accord how exactly this could be accomplished. This body at once uttered the words, "very well !" Thenceforth this body has been carrying out just what has been described above.

Someone writes the name of Hari on tulasi leaves then strings a garland out of these leaves to present to this body ; this garland is usually given away to someone else. Abani Sharma Baba often writes seed mantras on bel leaves and places them on this body's head or hands ; these leaves are then given away by this body to certain people.

However that may be, I explained everything to Didi and said : "I seem to have committed myself. So you must remember to bring this to my kheyāla on *Gurupūrṇimā* day. Also do something else. Write seed mantras of Śiva and Śakti with red sandalwood paste on bel leaves and Viṣṇu manṭras with white sandalwood paste on tulasi leaves."

Although I did not specify which parṭicular mantras ṭo write, Didi had previously heard several seed mantras from me so she decided which mantras to write on bel leaves.

That same day I saw that some bel leaves had been carefully set aside in one place and some tulasi leaves elsewhere ; furthermore the kumārīs of the Ashram were preparing sandal paste. Also Didi was writing with red sandalwood paste on bel leaves. Then she got hold of some tulasi leaves, cleaned them carefully but could not make up her mind what to write on them, so she left them as they were and went away. But all this I perceived on a subtle plane, not in the physical.

In the night before *Gurupūrṇimā* I was lying in bed but could not go to sleep. I was merely turning from one side to the other ; I had had no inclination to sleep for the past few nights. My cot had been placed out in the courtyard. I lay there for some time, then went upstairs to lie down on the first floor. Shortly after I heard the girls sing kīrtan, so I understood that it must be early morning.

It had been Didi's desire to dress this body up and do puja on *Gurupūrṇimā* days. But in the morning when I came downstairs, I told her this was not to be. I also entered the newly built Virajā Mandir and told Viśu the same thing and then went upstairs to sleep. When Didi realized her aspiration had no chance of being fulfilled, she arranged for the worshipping of the outlines of my feet of which prints had been taken some time ago, and then went to the kitchen to cook. Because on that day a considerable number of people had been invited to partake of prasāda. She thus completely forgot what I had requested her to remind me of (concerning the dīkṣā of certain disembodied beings).

Meanwhile I was lying on my bed in the morning, when I noticed that my paternal cousin had arrived. This time his wife was with him. As soon as I saw them I sent Udās to fetch Didi. The amazing part of the story is that no sooner had I had this kheyāla than Didi remembered my previous instruction and ran to contact me even before Udās could reach her. Thereafter I went with her to the new mandir.

Didi quickly wrote with red sandalwood paste a Śiva seed mantra and a Śakti seed mantra on two bel leaves. When she had done this, she asked : "What shall I now do with these ?" I also echoed : "Yes what shall we do with them ?" Didi remarked : "It will be better to place these leaves on the waters of Gaṅgā." I said : "Yes, this is all right." Thereafter Didi started cleaning tulasi leaves, but her mind became restless. She was worried that some of the food she had put on the stoves for cooking might get charred. Just then someone came to call Didi. She placed the tulasi leaf into Viśu's hands and went away. On receiving the leaf, Viśu asked me what seed mantra he should write on it. I told him : "You worship Nārāyaṇa, so you may write some such seed mantra on the tulasi leaf." He complied and then placed the leaf in my hands. I returned it to him.

This same Viśu had received three seed mantras from this body six years ago in a dream. He remembered two of the mantras but the third he had entirely forgotten. He used to speak of this to this body from time to time, but as I had no kheyāla to reply, I had not explained anything further to him. Once, when he raised the subject again at Vindhyāchal, this body instructed him to continue his japa of the two seed mantras he remembered. Up to date this was what he had been doing. Today when I returned the tulasi leaf to him, he suddenly intuitively knew the mantra written on the tulasi leaf was identical with the third seed mantra he had dream of. He asked me for verification. I confirmed this. His face lit up with inner joy.

There now ramained the two seed mantras written on the two bel leaves. So far this body had no kheyāla who should be the recipients of these. But when Viśu had been given the tulasi leaf then this body had the kheyāla that Mona baba (Sri Monmohan Ghosh) who had been the architect of the new temple (Virajā Mandir) should be presented with a bel leaf. So he was called and one of the bel leaves was handed over to him. There now remained one more bel leaf. Thereupon emerged another kheyāla, namely if any uninitiated person should now approach this temple, it would be allotted to him or her. This may seem to you like a lottery! (Laughter). At that moment I noticed that Gopal Baba's (Dr. Gopal Das Gupta) wife was standing just outside near a window. I called out to her: "Wouldn't you like to come inside ?" She at once entered the temple and did praṇāma to me. As she was going back, I asked Viśu: "Shall I give the bel leaf to her ?" Viśu replied: "Very well, why don't you ?" Three times I asked him the same question and each time he gave the same reply. So the bel leaf was presented to Gopal Baba's wife. This is what transpired on *Gurupūrṇimā* day.

I: Two days before *Gurupūrṇimā* when your paternal cousin came to you in his subtle body, you had remarked that some other persons in their subtle bodies accompanied him.

Ma: So it was.

I: Were they all deceased ?

Ma: They were not.

I: Then who were they ?

Ma : Why, cannot those that are alive also come in their subtle bodies ?

I : Of course they can. Were they also supplicants for dīkṣā ?

Ma : They were.

I : Were those that later received bel leaves from you in the physical among those that appeared to you then in their subtle bodies ?

Ma : Why else should they obtain the leaves ?

I : Can I then look upon this incident as initiation ?

Ma : Whatever you wish to believe.

I : But what would you say ?

Ma : I can only repeat : "Whatever you choose to believe."

I : Suppose I do consider this as a dīkṣā, then from whom did they receive initiation ?

Ma : (laughing) From God.

I : Suppose I maintain they received their dīkṣā from you ? Then ?

Ma : I have just declared : "They received it from God."

Swami Saṅkarānandaji : This amounts to the same thing !

I : Well, you had said to your paternal cousin : "This body does not normally initiate any body." Suppose I consider this as your limitation, in other words : Dīkṣā is the onething you cannot perform.

Ma : (Laughing) Even if you hold on to this so-called limitation, you wlll not be able to keep it up.

I : Why not ? If a certain rule is never broken, surely this is but a form of limitation !

Ma : This body does not ordinarily give dīkṣā in the manner in which it is usually done among you. Nevertheless certain mantras have indeed emanated from these lips and others have accepted them Therefore in one way or another the mantra has indeed been bestowed. Besides, I have often remarked that some persons repeat their mantras incorrectly. A few of them approach this body from time to time, saying : 'Ma, it does not seem that the way I am performing my japa is correct. Should I then carry out my japa in such and such a manner ?" They thus themselves express the desire to change their way of doing japa which corresponds to this body's kheyāla.

I : Ma, you say, you do not ordinarily give initiation. This assertion has no meaning. For instance Bholanath and Bhaiji have obtained their mantras from your own lips. Moreover you yourself assert that when you present devotees with flowers, garlands and so on, this amounts to transference of power. Communication of power is called dīkṣā. One way to describe dīkṣā is transference of power.

Ma : (Laughing) Why only flowers and garlands ? Even when sweets or other things are given to people to eat a similar effect can be obtained.

Nārāyaṇa Swāmī : Did your paternal cousin obtain what he asked for ?

Ma : Yes, he did.

I : Did he receive it in the new temple ?

Ma : Yes, not only he ; his wife, his younger brother ; all of them were recipients.

LOVE'S GAME

M. P. Jain

Lord, You are here, not far above
Sitting somewhere high in the sky,
You play with us the game of love
Though You seldom let us come nigh.

O Sorcerer, unannounced You come
And You rob us of our sense before,
You make us mute, dumb and numb
Lest we should supplicate and implore.

And leaving a trail of joy behind,
Like lightning You suddenly disappear ;
As we come out of the treat, we find
O, You were there and none else, Dear !

But how long will You play that way ?
How long will You keep us in the dark ?
How long will You keep Yourself away ?
How long will You hide behind the mask ?

You have to abide by the rules of the Game,
You are supposed to keep the promise You make ;
A long time has elapsed since You came,
So You have to come again for love's sake.

For love's sake You have to stay in this abode
Till each drop of blood feels the flow,
The joy is shared by each molecule, every pore
And the whole being becomes consciously aglow.

And then radiating joy, peace and light
You have to twinkle through these eyes ;
Hair raised in pores brimming with delight :
An ecstasy too high for the mind to size.

OUR DADAMASAI : SRI BIPIN BEHARI BHATTACHARYA

R. K. Banerjee

(Continued from the April, 1979 issue)

(2)

Bipin Behari's initiation by the ancestral Guru as well as his wife's duly took place in the presence of Ma when a tiny child. There was some connection between his ancestral Guru and the ancestral Guru of Didimā's family. In fact the two Gurus used to live side by side. The line of Gurus was so well established that the *Adi-Guru* (the first in the line) was known to appear in spirit at critical periods.

Although Dādāmaśāi was thus a Guru by heredity, he never gave initiation of his own accord but only at the request of his elder. After the *dīkṣā* he did not expect any monetary gifts from a disciple. Brahmachari Tanmayānanda, our well-known Ashram singer, happens to be the son of one such disciple.

With Didimā as his fitting consort Bipin Behari's home was well known for great hospitality. In fact it was nick-named the "2-30 to 3 p.m. house", since unexpected guests were always served meals even at that late hour. Similarly the house was kept open for dinners till late at night. The children were assiduously taught to welcome guests, carry their belongings inside and attend to their needs to the utmost capacity.

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* *Dādāmaśāi*—Maternal grandfather.

* *Didimā*—Maternal grandmother.

Now let us examine the amazing relationship that gradually developed between the father and his illustrious daughter. When Ma about five years old, an incident is related which throws some light on this subject. Nirmalā was very fond of listening to Her father's devotional songs. She would learn them and subsequently accompany him during his singing. One evening Nirmalā suddenly asked :

"Father, you keep on repeating the name of Hari. Who is this Hari ?" In reply she was told that Hari was a name of God.

"What happens if you repeat His name ?"

"If you call out to Him, He comes to you."

"Having come what does He do then ?"

"Just as I call you when I require you for something and you obey me, so does He come to you at the time of your need. If you then ask him in simple faith for what you want, He fulfils your wishes. Just as we call you to us and ask you to carry out a certain task and you proceed to do so, so does God grant you whatever you ask of Him, and He comes to you whenever you call out to Him. Of course, He does many other things as well."

"If you call out to Him again and again as 'Hari', will He appear before you ?"

"He will."

"How big is He ?"

"Very big indeed."

"Will that field there be able to contain Him ?"

"No, not at all, but if you call out to Him repeatedly, He will come, and then you will see for yourself how big He really is, who He is, and how beautiful."

Thus Ma quietly induced Her father to describe the Supreme Being to the best of his beliefs for the benefit of his little daughter. From his answers to these searching questions, we can draw our own conclusions about the father's character and the relationship between him and 5 years old Nirmalā.

This relationship was to change imperceptibly in course of time as we shall now proceed to describe. It was Bipin Bihari's habit never to remain at home for any length of time, since he was in great demand because of his proficiency in kīrtan and bhajans. But it is to his credit that before leaving the house he always asked little Nirmalā whether She wanted to accompany him. He would take his daughter to family pūjās and festivals and while visiting places of pilgrimage, also on an occasional visit to the house of his ancestral Guru or once to the Brahmaputra valley to take a purification bath after continuous family calamities such as the successive deaths of his three young sons.

Here is an illustration of how, unknown to the fond parent, Ma even as a tiny child was beginning to influence his thoughts and actions. Bipin Behari fully intended to leave Nirmalā behind when travelling with his wife to their ancestral Guru and started out from the house without Ma. But then it was Her *Kheyāla* that prevailed over his will. Something or other made him change his mind on the way and he returned home, only to take Nirmalā along with them. Again, after bathing in the Brahmaputra, the couple had planned to send their daughter back home with friends but somehow She managed to remain with them.

Once Bipin Behari took Nirmalā from kheorā to Sultanpur on the occasion of the annual family Durga Puja. They had to start out on foot, then proceed by country boat and eventually embark on a steamer. Strange events took place on the way, incomprehensible to Bipin Behari, but seemingly familiar to his daughter. During the journey an entirely unknown woman became strongly attached to Ma, much to the initial annoyance of Her father. On their way they passed a huge fire, which Bipin Behari was naturally in a hurry to leave behind, but Nirmalā stopped him and pointed out the probable predicament of those affected by the conflagration. While Her father was wondering what to do, Ma again pointed out how the fire was suddenly obating and almost dying out. Although finding this amazingly strange, it never occurred to Bipin Behari that his little daughter's influence might have controlled such a calamity.

In due course Bipin Behari's health became affected by his keeping long and irregular hours and frequently engaging in unstinted hard work. Once he overstrained himself while carrying out a task entrusted to him by his mother Tripurā Sundari Devi. He developed breathing difficulty which recurred from time to time throughout the rest of his life.

Slowly and inexorably Ma's impending marriage drew near. She had already reached the age of twelve. Her paternal grandmother's health was gradually deteriorating and she was anxious to see her favourite grand-daughter settled in the Life. But although she died knowing that her wish was about to be fulfilled, she did not live to see the wedding which took place in 1909, when Ma was nearly thirteen years old.

The bridegroom was Ramani Mohạn Chakravarti, hailing from a well-known Brahmin family at Vikrampur, of Bharadwaja Gotra. He was considered a suitable match for Nirmalā in all respects, particularly as his family was of equally high traditional heritage.

Only after performing his mother's *śrāddha* ceremony, Bipin Behari was able to seriously attend to his daughter's marriage preparations, which included fetching elephants from Agartala for the party of the groom to travel on.

For the next few years, in the absence of Ma's husband who worked away from home, Bipin Behari had a necessary role to play in taking Ma to and at times fetching Her from the house of Ramani Mohan's eldest brother's family, where She spent the first four years after Her marriage.

Subsequently Ramani Mohan, later known as Bholanath, took over Bipin Behari's role as Ma's natural protector and guardian in the eyes of society, while Ma's public life gradually unfolded. Ma was now playing the part of an orthodox young married woman emerging from the secluded atmosphere of a near-purdah society.

Religious festivals and functions were then started by the nucleus of devotees of Dacca and its neighbourhood. During the first celebration of Ma's birthday at Siddheswari in 1928, Dādāmaśai's kīrtan rose to such a pinnacle that Ma called out to him, took off Her own garland, placed it round his neck, and in the presence of all prostrated Herself at his feet in *praṇāma*. Thus did Ma acknowledge publicly Her father's divinity.

In 1929, when Ma's birthday celebrations were started at Siddheswari and later moved the newly established ashram at Ramna, Bipin Behari's kīrtan again rose to great heights in the presence of the devout assembly that had gathered. Immediately after, Ma left Dacca with only Dādāmaśāi as Her escort on Her journey to Mymensingh, although Bhaiji did join them later.

From 1929 onwards, Ma was acknowledged and firmly established in Dacca society. We find Dādāmaśāi and Didimā being encouraged by Ma to accompany Her to distant places such as Kalighat (Calcutta), Varanasi, Hardwar, Risikes, Lakshmanjhula, Dehradun, Ayodhya, Mathura, Vrindaban and subsequently Tarapith and Nalhati.

In between, from time to time, the fond parents went with Ma to Her ancestral homes in Vidyākut and Kheorā. There were instances when Ma asked Dādāmaśāi's permission before travelling from place to place. There were also instances of Bipin Behari being encouraged to venture forth on his own to places of pilgrimage. Once he accompanied the great saint Swami Visuddhananda and his foremost disciple Pandit Gopinath Kaviraj to Puri.

It is interesting to note that in 1932, when Ma was leaving Dacca for an unknown destination quite suddenly for an indefinite period, She had no *kheyāla* to seek Dādāmaśāi's permission. When informed of Ma's impending departure, he did not show any inclination to see Her off. Ma is said to have exclaimed: "So he did not come. He may not see me for a long time as I shall no longer enter the houses of householders." Bholanath had by this time completely taken over his father-in-law's duties as Ma's guardian and protector.

By 1935, at the age of 69, Dādāmaśāi was no longer keeping good health and took up residence in Calcutta. However, he still accompanied Ma on a few excursions now and again.

As mentioned previously, Ma inherited, as it were, Her love for devotional music from Her father. He often used to refer to Her wonderful *bhāva* while She listened to his poetical songs with rapt attention from Her earliest childhood. We know of some of the more important songs which Ma learning from him and used to sing much later, sometimes with him, sometimes on Her own. For instance, during Her visit to Kashi in 1935 (long before the Ashram was started there), She sang one of Dādāmaśāi's favourite songs: "*Āmār ki holo vyārām, Kevala Hari Rām*" etc

In 1937 when Dādāmaśāi was staying with Her on the banks of the Narmadā near Chandod (the Bhimpura Ashram was established much later), they would sing together some favourite songs, such as :

1) "*Rādhā mama prāṇa, Rādhā mama jñāna,*
Rādhā mama dhyāna, Rādhā nāma sāra."

2) "*Āmi ki Tār saṅga chhārā hai*
Je jāne kātar prāṇe dāki āmi, Mā kai Mā kai"

3) "Mā dāk śune nā, dekhā dai nā,
Mā bujhi mor benche nei."

And so, we come to the end of the earthly days of this simple, God-intoxinated soul who used to lead a life of renunciation from his youth onwards, who was not really interested in worldly affairs or the exacting duties of a householder. A graphic account of his last days, as vividly depicted in the diary so faithfully kept by Gurupriya Didi, will be of immense interest to all, more so as it shows Ma's complete detachment as regards the body, yet the closest affinity to the soul of those in contact with Her, be they Her nearest kith and kin or otherwise. This is surely in the best tradition as laid down in the immortal *śāstras.*

In December 1937, after returning from a long pilgrimage on the banks of the Narmadā with Ma and Didima, Bipin Behari fell seriously ill in Calcutta, while Ma happened to be in Tarapith.

Here begins the story of the moment to moment happenings preceding the demise of this noble soul, which must be gone through in detail to appreciate Ma's inscrutable līlā throughout this period, and its repercussions on devotees who watched it.

On the 25th Agrahayana (approximately Dec. 10th, 1937) news of Dādāmaśāi's critical condition was brought to Ma at Tarapith by certain Calcutta devotees. It was earnestly conveyed to Her that both Didima and Dādāmaśāi wished for Ma's presence at his bedside. Ma appeared unwilling but was eventually persuaded by Bholanath to board an afternoon train, in the face of Her grim determination to leave Calcutta the very next morning !

Ma reached Calcutta at 9-30 p.m. that night and visited Dādāmaśāi enroute from Howrah to Birla Mandir in Gurusadaya Rd. in Ballygunge where She was usually putting up in those days.

After a few hours of rest there, Ma left at 8 a.m. the next morning and once more briefly visited Dādāmaśāi for what turned out to be the last time enroute to Howrah Station, when everybody burst into tears at Her departure.

True to Her *kheyāla* Ma would then no longer enter the abodes of householders, so She remained standing outside of Dādāmaśāi's residence, while his cot was brought out and placed near the doorway. He sat up in bed and while people were gravely whispering among themselves, he looked towards Ma and called out thrice : "Ma, Ma, Ma !" Finally he heaved a deep sigh on another note of "Ma" and then lapsed into silence until Her departure.

It seemed obvious that Dādāmaśāi had for the time being forgotten that he may have ever entertained any paternal feelings towards Ma and was now looking upon Her in the light of the Universal Mother. Ma Herself noticed this change of attitude on his part before taking leave.

Ma returned to Tarapith late on the 26th Agrahayana. While resting that night, She drew Gurupriya Didi's attention to the fact that she was clearly perceiving Dādāmaśāi who appeared before Her, crying, "Take me!" To this Ma replied: "There is still some cloud left." At this Dādāmaśāi exclaimed: "How can this small bit of cloud be at all effective?" It was clear that Dādāmaśāi was asking Ma for release of his spirit from his body and Ma was pointing out that his time on earth had not yet been completed, so there were still some moments to be lived out.

Subsequently Ma confided to Didi, "See, I can notice the clouds getting thinner—they may even disappear shortly. Your Didima must be worrying a lot and thinking of this body and so a repercussion is being produced here."

Ma remained in Tarapith throughout the 27th and 28th Agrahayana. Bholanath was not well but had to perform special pujas to the Goddess Tara. On Wednesday, the 29th Agrahayana, Ma suddenly decided to leave Tarapith late at night, with Bholanath, Didi, and Swami Akhandananda, but unexpectedly got down at Burdwan at 3-30 a.m. for twelve hours or so. She entered a Sikh dharmaśālā and rested there without partaking of any food.

On Thursday, the 1st of Paus, at 6-30 p.m. Ma was at Burdwan Station, waiting to board a train to Varanasi. Before this, she had requested Swami Akhandanandaji, to live alone for Dādāmaśāi's bedside in Calcutta and to remain there, but the Swami was reluctant to leave Ma before Her departure, with the result that he missed a car ride back to Calcutta with some devotees who were returning from Burdwan by road.

So, when he eventually did reach Dādāmaśāi's bedside late that night, it was only to find that Bipin Behari had breathed his last a little earlier, at 11 p.m.

Dādāmaśāi had left his mortal remains in full consciousness, sitting up in bed, taking the holy name softly with his lips, and listening to Didima chanting the holy name loudly for his benefit.

Meanwhile, that same night, while travelling to Varanasi, Ma hardly touched any food. Much later She told Didi : "I could see everything that was happening quite clearly—just as you see pictures in the bioscope. I saw your Dādāmaśāi's body, but above it another ethereal body appeared, only to join up with it in due course. This latter body was shadowy, white, yet luminous. This body (referring to Herself, then started speaking aloud, exactly like conversing with you all uttering mantras connected with initiation into *samnyāsa*. The ethereal body then started getting larger and fainter and gradually disappeared entirely. Just as a spot of oil or milk, when dipped into a pail of water, gradually gets bigger and bigger and then disappears. Or just like the smoke of a cheroot, which when emitted from the mouth slowly spirals up into larger and larger circles and finally vanishes."

Mataji reached Varanasi on the 2nd Paus and put at a dharmaśālā where news of Dādāmaśāi's demise was later received by telegram. Ma remarked : "He died after three days. The little cloud that remained, had now blown away. If anyone is born on earth, his exit must also take place sometime or other."

Those attending on Mataji during the last few days had

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come to realize that Dādāmaśāi's life had been quickly drawing to its conclusion. He had lived to the mature age of seventy-one, maintaining his quiet dignified disposition to the end.

At this stage a devotee could not resist asking Ma : "If you knew he was going to die, why did you not visit him again ? Such a tragic event does not appear to have affected you in the least. How hard you are !"

Ma smiled gently and replied : "On the day of my arrival in Calcutta I had asked him : 'Father, may I go now ?' and he had replied : "Yes, Ma, you may go." So it was he who had originally bidden farewell to me."

The same night, Bholanath approached Ma and said : 'After all he was your father, you must do something now. You have behaved quite dutifully so far. As a daughter you have now certain obligations to fulfil. 'Ma's reply was historic and significant. She said : "*Everybody is my father* ! I never say —'I will do this, I will not do that.' It is you who make me carry out whatever work lies in your power to induce me to perform."

Bholanath, stricken with grief, had been crying openly since receiving the tragic news. He again asserted : "We shall do whatever we can."

So on the 4th day after Dādāmaśāi's death, namely Sunday, the 4th Paus, as befitting the duty enjoined on a married daughter, Bholanath arranged for some rites to be performed. But Mataji requested : "If you wish to observe these ceremonies, do so in a private house, and not in a dharmaśālā like this." This was done accordingly. When all preliminaries had been completed, Ma was escorted to Her āsana by the pandits 'But She at once became listless—with no apparent will of Her own.

So it was actually Bholanath who performed the rites, while maintaining contact with Mataji whose eyes remained wide open but fixed downwards.

Later during the day Ma said to Didi : "Father had attained to a state of utter renunciation at an early age. He had left his home and donned saffron robes even before his marriage, but he was compelled by others to return. Soon after his marriage he departed similarly once again. He never mixed whole heartedly with his children. In fact whenever he used to return home after prolonged periods of absence, his children would hardly recognise him and actually felt afraid of the stranger".

Ma went on to recall. "But your Dadamaśāi did suffer from occasional bouts of anger. It has been said that even Jīvanmuktas are at times subjected to some sort of intense emotion such as anger and the like. But these wholly momentary feelings leave no traces. You must have noticed how Father did indeed give away to sudden outbursts of temper, sometimes dreadfully so, but in no time was this anger completely thrown aside. It may not be easy for you to comprehend all this."

That same day, after somehow willy-nilly going through the ceremonies, Mataji left for *Vindhyāchala.*

Gurupriya Didi had a subsequent conversation with Ma concerning Dādāmaśāi's mysterious samnyāsa at the ultimate end. Ma confirmed that during Her final talk with Her Father on a subtle plane, She had automatically uttered samnyāsa mantras for him, as if he were undergoing what is normally looked upon as initiation into samnyāsa in the strict sense. Mataji further reminded Didi that. She had performed a similar service for Bhaiji in *Mānas Sarovar* during their return from the Kailash expedition earlier in 1937.

On Monday, the 5th Paus, Ma returned to Varanasi at 9-30 a.m. and eventually departed to the Dehradun hills on the 7th Paus, but not before sending Bholanath and Didi to Calcutta to be present for Dādāmaśāi's full *śrāddha* ceremony that was performed by the family on Sunday, 11th Paus.

Swami Akhandananda had under Ma's instructions all along remained behind in Birla Mandir, Calcutta. In due course Dādāmaśāi's Śrāddha ceremony was performed in Calcutta in the presence of Bholanath and some devotees with full honours.

Thus ended the earthly career of Ma's father who was born with a definite predestined role to play. He played his role well, as time advanced, more and more at the instigation of his unpredictable daughter. This wonderful līlā between Father and daughter was finally played out to its logical conclusion at the end of forty-one years.

Sometime in April 1938 while in Dehradun, Ma held the following conversation with Gurupriya Didi. In Ma's own words : "At about the same time (in January, 1938, while describing Bhaiji's appearance in a subtle body to Ma) while in Dehradun, this body again had a wonderful darśana of Father. When he was first seen, he had a white turban on his head and wore no other clothes—as if presenting the picture of utter renunciation. But his appearance was exactly the same as the one by which he was known to us—quite clear. To start with he was at some distance from this body (Ma). But listen to the funny part of the story : as soon as he came nearer, a transformation took place. He appeared in an ethereal body full of an intensely bright, white light. Later that body also merged with this body (Ma), yet keeping its identity separate. The impression of the earthly relationship of fatherhood was still retained."

In conclusion, may we then when we reach the end of our own lives, dare to remind Ma of Her statement, "*Everybody is my father*", and thus may we also hope to achieve our salvation in a similar way as Dādāmaśāi achieved his, through the grace and mercy of Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi ?

'Jai Guru, Jai Ma !

The Last Call

Srimoni

I want to tell the world,
Nothing is lasting on this earth
Except love for THAT which is eternal
But who will hear Me ?

* * * *

"*Human life is fruitful when one becomes a pilgrim to the revelation of one's True Being (Svarūpa Prakāśa). Time is fruitful when one is ever keenly intent on becoming self-pervaded.*"

SHRI SHRI MA

THE NAME IS GOD

Swami Ramdas

1. God and His name are not distinct from one another. The name is God Himself. The moment we think of the name our mind is filled with the presence of God. There is no easier way of focussing our thought upon God than taking constantly His Name. When we repeat the name aloud we feel our heart flooded with the ecstasy of love because the sound of the Divine name awakens the heart to the bliss and love of God.

2. Although the mental repetition of the name is held to be far more efficacious than the verbal repetition, still, the rare experience of the sweetness and joy derived by uttering the name aloud is incomparable. When the entire being of the devotee thrills with rapture to the music of the name, hc realizes that the name is BRAHMAN.

3. God is both manifest and unmanifest. The name stands for such a God. Here the unmanifest is the all-pervading, infinite, immutable, tranquil, static spirit of God. The manifest is the entire universe of name, form and movement. with all its beings, creatures and things. The name stands for this all-inclusive and transcendent Godhead, who is both personal and impersonal.

4. The Divine is thus the beginningless source of all creation and the creation itself ; God, the absolute, is the nameless name.

5. The Name can free the soul from bondage. The Name can take it to its highest consummation of spiritual life. The Name can grant a blind soul Divine sight The Name can bless an individual with a universal vision full of sublimity. The Name can lift the soul to inconceivable heights of God-realization.

6. The power of the Name is invincible. A mind that is deemed unconquerable, by the soothing influence of the Name becomes docile, yielding and submissive. The mind itself is transformed into God by the power of the Name. He who takes refuge in the Name can work wonders. Death itself will stand in awe of him. He can command all the forces of nature and direct them to bring about a spiritual awakening in the hearts of men. The Name can make a human mind an embodiment of eternal love and joy. The Name can convert an individual into a cosmic reality—an ignorant soul into a very God.

7. The Name is all-sufficient. The utterance of it is itself meditation. The ecstasy born of it is itself *samādhi*. The Name is love, light, power and joy.

8. The writer can vouch for it from his own experience that the Name by itself without any other *sādhanā* can grant one the fullest vision of God everywhere and may merge him in an ocean of never ending love and joy.

9. There is no *sādhanā* that can be universally adopted by all people and is at the same time as simple for realizing God as the Divine Name. It is perfectly true in the words of a saint that he who has God's Name always on his tongue is a Jivan Mukta, or a liberated soul.

10. So, friends to whatever race, caste, creed or colour you may belong, take up the Name of God and feel the sweet communion with it, and you may depend upon it, your soul through constant bathing in the nectar of the Name will not only be purified but will also be illumined by the omnipresent and omniscient light and love of God. This practice of taking the Name will lead the unyielding spirit of man to complete surrender to the omnipotent power and will of God. In the early stages, if the

Name is repeated with earnestness faith and concentration, the face and body of the devotee will shine with a peculiar lustre, his mind will be filled with wisdom and his heart with love. This is due to the predominance of *satva guṇa* in the devotee. Later if the repetition is continued with the same zeal, he will behold the universe before him as the very expression of God. He will have the vision of God everywhere—VERILY THE NAME IS GOD HIMSELF.

Oneness

Elwood Decker

Behind every
Sensed variety
There is the ONENESS
Of all consciousness
In its pure Balance
We learn true silence

Without artifice
Its thought speaks to us :
I AM THAT I AM
The wholeness I am
The only I am
I Am your I Am

Be still and you'll find
I'am Essence of Mind
When you prefer me
I'm your samādhi
I am forever
Wherever you are

I'm in all the same
Love me as your game
In any way well
Nor need you to tell
I'll know and respond
Everywhere beyond

Do this constantly
Remembering me
With inspiration
And healing have fun
Then leave dreaming sleep
with devotion deep

Here and now in me
Relax and be free
Knowing we are one
Like light and the sun
In the whole Oneness
Of our consciousness

Our meditation
Will be perfection
Where infinite Bliss
Is eternal peace
Now and forever

GLIMPSES OF MA IN CALCUTTA

(II)

Anil Ganguli

(*Continued from the previous issue*)

For several years we had been feeling the need of an Ashram somewhere in the suburbs of Calcutta, larger than the one at Ballygunge and also in more open and quieter surroundings, preferably on the bank of the Ganges. At last our desire was fulfilled in the spring of 1958. A two-storeyed building on a plot of land (measuring about 3 acres) overlooking the holy Ganga was found in the District of 24 Parganas, about 20 kilometers to the north of Ballygunge. The property was purchased partly out of the sale proceeds of the Ballygunge Ashram and partly out of subscription from donors, mostly belonging to the middle class. Subsequently extensive additions were made phase by phase—a *Nat Mandir* (temple hall), a guest house, a flat on the top of the *Nat Mandir* consisting of separate rooms for Ma, Didima and Didi and another two-storeyed block, built right on the bank of the Ganga and dedicated to Ma. The site of the Ashram is not far from Dakshineswar, sanctified and made memorable for ever by the *līlā* of Thakur Sri Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa Deva.

One day Ma remarked that some time in the past this site of the Ashram at Agarpara used to be a centre of spiritual culture. Such a holy tradition has made this place pre-eminently suitable for our purpose.

The inaugural ceremony of the new Ashram coincided with

Didima's *Saṃnyāsa Utsava* on the 13th of April, 1958, followed by Ma's *Janmotsava* from the 2nd to the 7th of May. The commodious hall of the Ashram and its extensive lawn overlooking the Ganga proved most suitable for these big functions and Ma was in the best of Her illumined forms throughout the period. Great saints such as Hari Babaji Maharaj, Maha Mandaleswar Swami Maheswarananda and Krishnananda Avadhutji graced Agarpara by their presence and gave illuminating discourses on religious subjects.

Since 1958, the Agarpara Ashram has been one of the most important centres of *Sri Sri Anandamayi Sangha*, which has 24 branches in India. Besides the usual *puja*, *kirtana* and *satsanga* every day, this Ashram provides for weekly sessions of *nāmakīrtana* (sunrise to sunset), *akhaṇḍa japa* and *satsanga* with a special programme of interesting talks and devotional songs. Moreover, it has, since 1977, been maintaining a charitable homoeopathic treatment centre. The annual functions that are regularly held are Ma's Birthday Anniversary, Didima's *Saṃnyāsa Utsava*, Durga Puja, Kali Puja, *Saṃyam Maha Vrata*, Saraswati Puja, Siva Ratri, Holi, etc. The affairs of the Ashram are in charge of Swami Swarupanandaji Maharaj, assisted by a committee with Sri R. K. Banerjee as the President and Sri G. P. Brahma as the Secretary.

Ma visited Agarpara in November 1959, on the occasion of *Saṃyam Vrata* ; and again in September 1960, in connection with the inauguration of the newly constructed temples—one for the statue of Bholanath and six Siva lingas, one for the portrait of Ma, and the third for Rama-Lakshmana, Gopala, Radha Govinda etc. This ceremony kept the Agarpara Ashram full of life for quite a few days. Thereafter, Durga Puja, commencing from the 26th September, was celebrated in the Ashram in Ma's presence with great eclat. Durga Puja is the greatest religious festival of Bengal, annually held in the autumn for three days when the Divine Mother Durga is believed to descend on the earth. Like Christmas, this is the season for merriment when near and dear-ones meet together and all sink their differences and join in the festive joy of the Puja In many places the deeper religious significance of Durga Puja is often lost in pomp and pageantry, ritualism and festive merriment.

The presence of Ma at Agarpara on this occasion gave the celebration a special tone which raised the spiritual fervour to a high pitch. The ritualistic service also was duly performed to perfection. Moreover, there was an atmosphere congenial to one's mind diving deep into itself and to feeling the presence of the Divine Mother Durga during the period of Her sojourn on earth. Brahmacharis of the Ashram officiated as priests. Thousands of Ma's 'children' were sumptuously served with *prasāda* every day. The climax was reached on *Vijayā Daśamī* (the day for immersion of the Image of Goddess Durga into the Ganges). The celebration was concluded with prostrate salutation to Ma who appeared in Her haloed glory. She distributed sweets with Her own hands to each and every 'child' making obeisance to Her. Everybody present on the occasion was fortunate in coming into personal contact with Ma, receiving Her smile and a glance ; some were also blessed with conversation with Her.

It was due to Ma's influence that the position of the Ashram at Agarpara was established on a firm footing in the social life of the locality. At the initial stages, the local people—particularly the younger generation—had the wrong impression that the Ashram, started and maintained by a group of wealthy citizens of Calcutta, was an organization in which there was no place for them. This unjustified impression was removed when they came into close contact with Ma. The people of Agarpara have since realized that Ma is the common Mother of all—rich and poor—and that everyone has a part to play in the furtherance of this great organisation inspired by Ma. In course of time Ma became the centre of attraction for thousands of residents of greater Calcutta. A large number of people who had been indifferent or even hostile to the Ashram became, in due course, its ardent supporters and enthusiastic volunteers in the service of Ma.

This change of attitude is due to God's grace and Ma is the embodiment of God's grace. As She is *Anandamayi*, She is also *kripāmayī*. Kripa flows out of Her spontaneously and without any interruption on the good and the bad, on saints and sinners not to speak of rich and poor. Ma exudes grace as the rose exudes its perfume. Whoever comes near Her physically, or even in thought, will benefit. Here are some anecdotes which speak for themselves.

On one occasion, four or five days before the date fixed for Durga Puja, it was Ma's *kheyāla* to go to an undisclosed destination off Barrackpore Trunk Road. Ma's car stopped at the humble cottage of an unknown villager. The joy of Her host knew no bounds. A few days ago, he had seen in a dream that Durga Puja was being celebrated in his home. The dream created a problem for the poor man who felt it incumbent on him to perform Durga Puja but lacked the means to do it. The girls accompanying Ma in Her car knew nothing about the poor man's dream or his problem ; and not even one of them was rich. One of them, a shy girl, happened to carry a purse containing the sum of Rs. 100/-. She felt an impulse to place the entire amount at the feet of Ma for such use as She might like to make of. Ma presented it to Her host. This was the nucleus of a fund which ultimately made it possible for the poor man's dream to be fulfilled.

In December 1960, Ma came from Rajgir to Calcutta and was expected to go straight to Agarpara from the Howrah Railway Station. But Her *kheyāla* decreed otherwise. To our surprise, Her car turned south instead of proceeding northwards for Agarpara. We were specially worried because Ma looked tired after the tedious Railway journey and Her body was none too well. We felt that Ma was badly in need of rest but Her arrival at Agarpara was delayed by several hours. It transpired later that Ma had visited the houses of four sick persons scattered over a large area of south Calcutta. Though belonging to different levels from the social, economic and spiritual points of view, they had one common factor—an earnest yearning for Ma's *darśana* on the eve of their final exit from this world ; and the exit was imminent in each case. Physical infirmities prevented them from going to Agarpara for *darśana*. The vibrations of their yearning had reached Ma and She responded to their call.

My sister's maid-servant, a destitute old woman, grief-stricken and sorrow-laden, once got priority over all devotees, rich and poor. She begged of me to create an opportunity for Ma's *darśana*. The scheduled period of Ma's stay on that occasion was short ; and long was the waiting list of candidates for *darśana*. In the circumstances, I was not in a position to give any assurance to the maid-servant, who therefore tried her luck on her own initiative. She went towards the Ashram, all alone. Not venturing to enter the hall crowded with 'big people', she sat, like a beggar woman, on the pavement of the road leading to the Ashram. Within a few minutes she had a wonderful experience. Let me give the gist of what she later narrated to me with tearful eyes : "I suddenly saw Ma coming towards the Ashram in a car which most unexpectedly stopped and its door was opened just in front of me. I touched Ma's feet. She smiled at me and said : 'This is not done'. I was flabbergasted and I completely broke down. Within a few seconds Ma's car started and Ma gently told me : 'Why are you crying ? There will be another meeting'. I am overwhelmed. When will the next meeting take place ?" Within a couple of days thereafter, the maid-servant happened to be loitering in front of a private house and most unexpectedly saw Ma sitting there. Her thirst for *darśana* had not been quenched on the first day. But her tears had touched Ma's heart and the maid-servent had this second opportunity.

Here is an example of Ma's untiring patience as recorded by a European. "Today at *darśana* time Ma was in an inward turned mood and did not speak. An old, tattered woman forced her way to the front and squatted on the floor close to Mataji. She talked loudly to Mataji for nearly twenty minutes, gesticulating with hands and feet. It was impossible for Mataji to move away even two inches and one could see that the complete lack of consideration on the part of the old woman was irksome to Mataji. Nevertheless, She did nothing effective to get rid of the intruder. She listened to her and smiled indulgently. A few times She raised Her folded hands in supplication : *Namaste*, go now ! But the old woman showed no inclination to leave Mataji alone. Her voice became ever louder and livelier, and Mataji smiled with ever more kindliness. The scene was annoying as well as moving and funny. Once Mataji's glance fell on me. It seemed to say: 'Look, this is how they are—like children, are they not? Thinking only of themselves. But one has to love them".*

Once Agarpara Ashram witnessed a sweet *līlā* on the occasion of Durga Puja. There was a large gathering of ladies and gentlemen representing different sections of the society of Calcutta, including some persons occupying the highest positions in India. There was a long line of candidates for *praṇāma*, most of them longing for a glance from Ma and yearning for an opportunity to talk to Her. The big 'brothers' and 'sisters' were waiting along with others, for their turn for offering *praṇāma*. In the meantime, a non-descript, dark girl aged about twelve or thirteen, got her chance in due course. She arrested the attention of the whole audience when Ma asked her: "Are you not the girl who had asked for *mālā* (necklace) the other day?" "Yes, Ma", said the girl, "it was I who had asked for a *mālā*." Then Ma told her to sit on the dais by Her side and the girl did so. A few minutes afterwards Ma gave her a precious pearl necklace, which had been presented to Ma by a Rani. Such special treatment received by so insignificant a creature roused the curiosity of Narayan Swamiji who wanted to know the secret behind this *līlā*. Ma said that this had something to do with the poor girl's previous birth.† How little do we know of the records of the previous births of those who receive special favour from Ma?

Here is another episode which reveals the wonderful *kheyāla* of Ma leading to a touching *līlā* with a tough stranger. A box containing silver untensils, entrusted to the driver of a taxi cab, was found missing and the driver was not traceable. This caused some excitement but Ma took no notice of it and dismissed the subject with a gentle smile. After some time the driver appeared on the scene—a ferocious-looking Sikh with a body of gigantic proportions. His harsh voice, rough demeanour and sullen look suggested that he was a tough person to deal with. But he was good enough to return the missing box along with its contents in tact. The driver seemed to be in a great hurry. He had neither the time nor the inclination to wait for Ma's *darśana*. Mention of Ma's name, not heard by him before, made no impression on him. He took leave of us in a huff and wanted to go away most unceremoniously. We appreciated the Sikh's honesty, but not his insufferable superciliousness. Eventually he was persuaded to come to Ma. She welcomed him but his response was cold and unseemly. Then Ma presented him with fruits, sweets, a costly silver utensil and a towel. But he declined to accept the offer. Never before had he seen Ma Anandamayi: and he did not seem to be interested in such a Mother. But within a few minutes after the first *darśana* the man seemed to be overwhelmed by Ma's kindly gestures. In fact, this stranger who had seemed a while ago to be an iron man without any soft sentiment, was now visibly moved and he behaved almost like a child. We were surprised at this sudden change. He expressed his gratitude to Ma for Her kindness, but still persisted in not accepting the gifts offered by Her. He frankly disclosed the reason—"I am not interested in this material utensil. If you are pleased to give me anything, please give me the real thing." Such a reply was least expected of him. Ma then suggested: "You better offer *bhoga* (sacramental oblations) in this utensil to Guru Nanakji and use this towel as a cover." With gratitude he at last accepted Ma's gift. His facial expression revealed that at least for the time being he had got something *real*—Ma's *kripa*—which was more valuable than the material objects received.

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* *From the diary of a European* by Melitasca Mhmann *Ananda Varta Vol. XIV/4/154*

† *Santān Vatsalā Sri Sri Ma Anandamayi* by Swami Narayananda Tirtha P. 297.

My chauffeur, a pious Brahmin of Uttar Pradesh, Badri Narayan Chowbey by name, was very eager for a chance to drive the car for Ma and wanted my assistance in this connection. But I could not oblige him because much better and more convenient cars than mine were always at the service of Ma. Still, the driver kept on silently praying to Ma for fulfilment of his desire. Some time in October, 1962, Ma was staying in a house at Ballygunge. One day at about 2 p.m., after the hectic programme of the morning session was over and people were relaxing, Ma suddenly came out to the main road and did something very unusual for Her. She started walking along the road, looked at the cars parked there, went past many and finally stopped by the side of my car. Then she boarded it and asked the driver to take Her to the house of Ranajit Kumar Banerjee. He did so under the impression that I must have told Ma about his desire to drive Her. As a matter of fact I had not.

There are numerous anecdotes of similar nature showing that a prayer, though not verbally communicated to Ma, has every chance of being answered if it is sincere. Sometimes *kripa* is received even without a prayer—it is called *Ahaituki Kripa*, the reason for which is not ascertainable.

In the early sixties Ma's *Ahaituki Kripa* was bestowed on the devotees of South Calcutta and, in particular, on some devotees with a special accommodation reserved for Ma's use. In October, 1962, She stayed at the residence of Rekha Basu, off Deshapriya Park in Ballygunge on the occassion of Durga Puja, and in December, 1963 at the "Thakur Bari" attached to Ranjit

Kumar Banerjee's house on Ballygunge Circular Road and thereafter at the house of Dwijen Nag on Rash Behari Avenue where *Gita Jayanti* was celebrated. An interesting incident took place in the *Nāma Yajña* that was observed in the last-named place after the *Gita Jayanti.* At dead of night the eminent musical artist Chhabi Banerjee and other girls were singing *kirtana* in a hall not accessible to any outsider when suddenly a scene was created by the unauthorised entry of an aristocratic-looking lady, immaculately dressed in a green silk sari and having tinkling anklets on her feet. To the surprise of all, this newcomer unhesitatingly took a position for herself in the midst of the girls and rhythmically danced with them. The soles of her feet were visible from time to time and some of the singers recognised that the "stranger" was no other than Ma whose *lila* thrilled the hearts of the participants and infused life into the *Nāma Yajña.*

Ma's short sojourns in the city proved a great boon to the devotees of Calcutta, particularly those who were not able to go all the way to Agarpara. After spending a few days in South Calcutta, Ma left for Puri on the 2nd January, 1964 and returned on the 11th to stop for a couple of days at the house of M.L. Ghose at New Alipore from where She went to Agarpara to attend the *Bhāgavata Saptāha* observed from the 15th to the 22nd January, 1964. Ma's next visit to Calcutta was on the occasion of the Holi festival in March, 1964.

It was our desire to have Ma in our midst during the Durga Puja in 1964 ; but we were deprived of this chance as Vrindaban got preference over us. In September, 1965, when Ma was in Varanasi, we beseeched Her to grace Agarpara by Her presence on the occasion of the ensuing Durga Puja. At that time war was going on between India and Pakistan ; and until the last moment it remained undecided whether Ma would come to Calcutta. Many advised Her not to do so. But she did not take any serious notice of such warnings. Fortunately the "cease fire" was proclaimed, and Ma reached Calcutta on the 24th September, just in time for the Durga Puja.

Whenever Ma is in Calcutta a swarming multitude of visitors collects round Her and the gathering invariably assumes enormous proportions. Even the extensive lawns, the commodious halls and the spacious terraces of the new Ashram fail to meet the requirements during Ma's presence. The assemblage poses numerous problems and calls for special arrangements, among other things, accommodation for guests from places far and near, supply of wholesome food, pure drinking water, electric power, transport and medical assistance. The most difficult and delicate task for the organisers is to "protect" Ma's body from the exuberance of *bhakti* on the part of some over-enthusiastic devotees. Men, women and children rush towards Ma in a frenzy, as it were. Many seem to lose, for the time being, their sense of proportion in their eagerness to come close to Ma. A few over-zealous, almost hysteric persons literally mob Ma. At the same time there are genuine devotees by the thousand who wait silently for hours under strenuous circumstances and put up with all sorts of inconveniences and discomforts in the hope of getting an opportunity for obeisance.

Notwithstanding the tremendous rush of visitors, Durga Puja was celebrated in Agarpara in a peaceful and orderly manner, and Ma was available to the public for *darśana* throughout the period. On this occasion a large number of non-Bengali residents of Calcutta were attracted to Ma and attended the function with great earnestness. They had heard the name of Ma

Anandamayi from different sources. The Ma of Shahbag of the twenties of this century became the Mataji of Northern India in the early thirties and thereafter emerged as the Universal Mother and is now sought by people hailing from both the hemispheres of the earth. A large number of foreigners had Her *darśana* in Delhi, Hardwar and Varanasi and quite a few in Calcutta.

"Glimpses of Ma in Calcutta" would be incomplete without a note on Hari Baba, the great saint of the Punjub, who accompanied Ma to this city on several occasions. Born in 1885 in a wealthy and respectable Sikh family of the Punjab, Hari Baba, originally known as Sardar Dawan Singh, had a promising career in the medical profession ; but he relinquished the world in his early youth and became a *sādhu* known as Swami Swatah Prakash (popularly called Hari Baba). Universally adored in the Punjab and recognised in Vrindaban as a great spiritual leader, he had Ma's first *darśana* in 1944. Since then until his exit from this world in 1970, Hari Baba had been in close touch with Ma and enjoyed a special position of honour in the Anandamayi organization. Ma often spoke of Hari Baba in the highest terms, waxing eloquent on his steadfastness of purpose, determination to reach the spiritual goal, discipline of character, childlike simplicity and spirit of service. Once Ma took Hari Baba from Calcutta to Dacca and to other places in East Bengal (now in Bangla Desh) associated with Ma's early life, and some years later, to South India. Hari Baba's visits to Calcutta are memorable for his *kirtan* and *rāsa līlā*. A great devotee of Mahaprabhu Gouranga Deva, he made it a point to visit the Mahaprabhu's birth place, Nabadwip, in Ma's company. He learnt Bengali solely for the purpose of appreciating the text of *Amiya Nemai Charit*, a biography of Mahaprabhu written in Bengali.

Hari Baba's devotion to Ma was unrivalled. A saint of the highest order, he was absolutely child-like and simple ; and there was not the slightest trace of self-consciousness in him about the fact that he was the idol of thousands of disciples. In recognition of his great contribution to the cause of spreading God's name, Swami Akhandanandaji Maharaj, President of Bharat Sadhu Samaj, has observed : "In Northern India probably there is not a single town the moral atmosphere of which has not been purified by Hari Baba's singing of God's name. There is hardly any wretched soul who has not heard about his character, his ideas and his sweet singing of God's name." At the same time, Hari Baba did not believe in conscious preaching, prompted by ego. Once he was giving a talk on the *Gītā* in Vrindaban. A queer type of man suddenly disturbed him by shouting—"Louder please, Maharaj ! you are not audible from this distance." Politely Hari Baba replied in a dignified manner : "Dear brother, reading of the *Gita* is a part of my daily routine, and is meant for God, not for men. If you want to hear me, better concentrate your mind and come closer to me " Hari Baba was a living example of the proverb : 'Example is better than precept."

Hari Baba's rapport with Ma was on a level beyond our comprehension. Hari Baba was an institution by himself. After his departure from this world there is no one to replace him.

After the Durga Puja of 1965, Calcutta was deprived of Ma's *darśana* for several years except occasionally for lightning visits, sometimes incognito. The devotees of Calcutta continued the Pujas, discourses on religious and philosophical subjects, *kirtan* and *Namayajña* in the Ashram and other centres such as the *Mauna Milani* ; but nothing could be a substitute for Ma's

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presence. Her absence was keenly felt, in particular, by devotees suffering from calamities such as death in the family. Some devotees, however, were fortunate enough to 'feel' Ma's blessings even when She was physically far away.

At last Ma was pleased to visit Calcutta on the 11th March, 1973, at the invitation of Dr. Gunen Roy in connection with the opening of the Niramoy Polyclinic in South Calcutta. The impetuous crowd of people that gathered for *daraśana* is unimaginable. The hall was just sufficient for 500 persons, but the number of claimants for seats was several thousands. There was a terrific stampede, but fortunately nobody was trodden on or hurt. The function was a grand success. Ma left Calcutta after a very short sojourn.

For the benefit of Her 'children' passing through trials and tribulations during Her absence from Calcutta, Ma left an invaluable message : "This body tells of one sovereign remedy for all ills—God. Trust in Him, depend on Him, accept whatever happens as His dispensation, regard whatever you do as His service, keep *satsanga*, think of God with every breath, live in His presence. Leave all your burdens in His hands and He will see to everything, there will be no more problems."

(*To be continued*)

TAT MUKHI*

Gauridasi

(Reprinted from Ananda Vārtā, Vol. XIII, I)

"*Yā devi sarva bhūtesu smritirūpeṇa saṁsthitā*
Namastasyai, namastasyai, namastasyai, namo namaḥ[1]."

Mataji continually instructs us to think of God at all times; not only to give as much time as possible to *sādhanā* but at every other moment also to keep up a constant flow of the thought of Him. As an aid to this seemingly impossible feat, She said to the Ashram girls on Sarasvati Puja day this year.

"Whatever you do, do it for Him and remember all the time that every person you meet is a mani-festation of Him, in fact everything you perceive……In this way you can keep up the remembrance of God also apart from your *sādhanā*, while you go about your work and leisure……"

This may sound like a very simple and umimportant matter to one who has no intention of trying to put it into unbroken practice. One can no doubt fo about quite easily repeating: "All is Brahman," but to do so with the inner *bhāva* (feeling) and outer expression towards every possible circumstance as if it were really so, is entirely another matter—a *sādhanā* in it self.

To tell a man trembling with fear before the snake that it is but a rope, does not necessarily change the deluded man's perception, nor his reaction to it.

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* *Tat Mukhi*—Facing THAT

[1] "Salutations again and again to the Goddess who resides in all being as awareness."

How very often have I not asked my self the question : Is it possible without the direct ultimate realisation that all *is* God, to go about behaving as if we knew it to be so ? Sometime when I sit in the cafeteria of the university where I am working, I watch and listen to the people there, trying not to be unduly disturbed by the noise and confusion which seems to drown one in a huge wave of loud purposelessness. I think about what Mataji tells us and it seems all but hopeless. Oh, one can sit there or indeed any where, and say : "All this is His *līlā*, He Himself, playing with Himself." But to believe it, to receive it as His *darśana*—is it possible without something of Ma's vision, without the realisation : "I am THAT" ?

Of course there are moments in the lives of all of us when mind is high and free, and everything does seem to be a *rāsalīlā* of the Lord. But generally these are not the moments when strife or confusion or pettiness have to be met head on, not the times when the mind desires silence and *dhyāna* while duly forces it to the mundane associations and requirements of one's work.

Is this likewise his *līlā*, that we cannot think of Him when we would ? Even in the quiet, solitary time of *sādhanā* when the mind is distracted by every possible memory, or the body restless and un-co-operative—is this also His manifestation ? Shall we then bow down to Devi in the form of *chāyā* (shadow) and let it go at that ? No, for then we would never know shadow, except as shadow. So we persist and invariably something wonderful happens that is worth suffering all distraction and discomfort : Suddenly, quietly, unexpectedly She is there in our mind, as it were, in the form of *śhānti* (peace), in the form of *tushti* (contentment), and we find that seemingly from nowhere *japa* or *dhyāna* has arisen of its own accord.

Therefore if we persevere also in trying to practise as mataji tells us to do at other times, regarding everything as Bhagavān Himself, at first as a pure effort of mind and will, an act of obedience – may we not expect that a time will come when we shall actually be seeing Him, our Self in all these devious ways, no longer merely imagining it ? For where there is aspiration and self-effort, there is also *kripā* (Grace).

I have a special memory of one *darśana* of mataji that sometimes cames to my mind like fire. We have all had such experiences and if they can just be recalled during the sounds of the day as will as in quiet times, then what seemed so difficult to put into practice might reveal itself as a steady flame of awareness.

One evening in the Ashram at Agarpara I happened to be sitting quite close to mataji during satsang. Though I was as near to Her as one could get and directly in front of Her, I could not see Her face. She was lying down and had Her arms folded and slightly raised so that Her face was entirely hidden from us. Like all who have been 'caught' by Her, I had only one desire —which will no doubt seem very foolish to those who have not been so captured—an intense longing just to sit there and look upon Her exalted expression, to see Her eyes that ever seem to be gazing into the beauty of Eternity. And it appeared that She was deliberately making that impossible. Then it occurred to me, this is exactly how God hides from us in His universe ; with the limbs of His own body. He remains veiled to our sight. I did not take my eyes off Mataji ; neither did I observe Her move

Her arm or raise Her head. Nevertheless, as soon as that thought had crossed my mind, I was suddenly looking straight into Ma's eyes and She into mine, that still, blissful gaze enveloping me—as if to say, "at last you have understood a little something."

Perhaps it is somewhat similar in our daily attempt to practise what Ma teaches. If we carry faithfully the mental concept that all we see and hear and do and experience is He Himself, hidden only by Himself, and therefore not hidden at all, shall, we not imperceptibly, in an unexpected moment find that from every pair of eyes into which we look. He Himself greets us ; that every sound we hear, which now seems to disturb and bewilder us when we are yearning for silence, is the sound of His own voice ; that every form is indeed his *murti* (embodiment) ?

"At all times and under all circumstances you must keep yourself in readiness to tread the path to the Supreme. Who can tell at what moment your giving, serving or obeisance will become an act of consecration to the One ? Everything is possible."

"Even in action as such the perfect one stands sell-revealed. This is the real significance of each action, of the striving which is the innate characteristic of the individual. Man's true nature prompts him to do actions that give it expression ; his true nature awakens in him the urge to perform actions of this type. Man's true nature, *Sva*, *Svayam*, *Ātma*—call it by any name—it is the Supreme, I myself."*

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* *From* : "*Words of Sri Anandamayi Ma.*"

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MOTHER'S 84th BIRTHDAY

Govind Narain

To begin with, I offer my devout salutations to the lotus feet of the Divine Mother, Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee. It was a long-cherished desire of the people here that she should be gracious enough to honour us by her presence in our midst and it is a very happy day for us all that in spite of the distance and in spite of the arduous nature of the travel, she has found it possible to be in our midst and we thank ourselves, we thank the Almighty for this great opportunity

To say anything about shree Shree Anandamayee Ma would be like showing a very feeble lamp to the sun. Ma Anandamayee was in Karnataka about 26 or 27 years ago, but only for a very short while, but she left memories here. Many people from Karnataka also had the opportunity of being in her gracious presence, like people in other parts of India—in Gujarat, Maharashtra, in Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and so-forth and they were anxious and keen that Karnataka also should have the opportunity of welcoming her here and benefitting by her gracious presence and by her Darshan and by her Upadesh. As I said, Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee is the very embodiment of the great truth. '*Ekam Sat Viprā Bahudā Vadanti*'. Among her devotees, there are people from all rcligions, all castes, all nations and people from far and wide, not only from the remotest corners of India, but from the various parts of the world, who come to her to seek peace. to seek solace and to seek enlightenment, which she has been bestowing with her graciousness on all of them. The outward motherly look, the compassion, the kindness, the love that she exudes all the time, can turn into a high philosophy and Vedanta and higher principles of Dharma, when somebody goes to her to seek enlightenment. Therefore, we are all very fortunate in having her here in our midst and on behalf of the citizens of Bangalore, on behalf of the State of Karnataka and on behalf of all the devotees and distinguished quests, I offer my most cordial welcome to Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee.

It is again a very fortunate moment for us that we have, in our midst, a great Giani, a great philosopher, a great Vedantist, His Holiness Shri Jagadguru Shankarāchārya of Dwaraka Sharda Peetham. I had the great honour of meeting His Holiness a month or so ago and from that very moment, he bestowed his graciousness and kindness and that attracted me towards him. Later, I had the good fortune of meeting him at Sringeri when all the four Jagadgurus had assembled there on May 1, the auspicious Shankara Jayanti Day. After 1200 years this congregation of the four Jagadgurus took place in Sringeri and they made many decisions, which, I am sure, would be to the benefit of the whole society. Perhaps many of you know, His Holiness is having soms physical ailment concerning heart and even before the congregation at Sringeri, he was not quite well. But his firm devotion to the cause which he represents and his great determination took him along to Sringeri in spite of the difficulties and he participated in the congregations there and all the devotees were enlightened and delighted to see all the four Jagadgurus together and listening to them and their Pravachanas. It is, therefore, a very great moment for us that we can find him in our midst, because after Sringeri he went to his native place in Distt. Shimoga to stay and I was constantly in touch with him and I was concerned that his physical body was not quite well. But in spite of that, he took this trouble of coming over to Bangalore and giving to us all, the benefit of his Darshana and the honour of listening to his Pravachana, the inaugural Pravachana of this holy Sammelan here. Therefore, on behalf of you all, I accord a very cordial welcome to His Holiness Shri Jagadguru Shankarāchārya of Dwaraka Sharda peetham.

I also take this opportunity of cordially welcoming all the great Mahāmandaleshwaras, Mahantas, Mahātmās and members of the ascetic order who have come here to give us the benefit of their presence and Pravachanas and listening to their words of wisdom. This is the purpose for which we have all assembled here. We accord them all a very hearty welcome.*

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* *Speech by Shri Govind Narain, Governor of Karnataka, at the inauguration of the 84th Birthday celebrations of Shree Shree Ma Anandamayee at Bangalore on the 9th May, 1979.*

"There is only one real life, namely the one dedicated to God, only one real death which is the death of death. After that there is no more birth and death."

SHRI ANANDAMAYEE MA

IN MEMORIAM : BRAHMANANDA BRAHMACHARI

Anil Ganguli

"Dust to the dust : but the pure spirit will flow
Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
A portion of the Eternal, which will glow
Through time and change unquenchably the same".
SHELLEY.

The material body of Brahmananda Brahmachari is dissolved and reabsorbed into the primal elements of which it was composed. But his sweet memory continues as a shining flame in Shree Shree Anandamayee Ashram. Mataji at first named Her beloved son Bibhu 'Kirtanananda' : because he experienced pure joy in singing *kirtan* and succeeded in infecting others with this soul-animating joy. But subsequently She called him Brahmananda. A master musician gifted with a spiritual power, he knew the mysterious art of using the Mother as a sounding-board and drawing out the divine melody lodged within Her. Earnest and sincere was his art of playing on the "Instrument" that is Ma. She often responded spontaneously and music welled out of Her.

Once Mataji heard a voice from another world and She burst forth into this snatch of song

"*Ao méré salona chhaliraé Banwari ré,*
Ao méré salona chhaliaré "

Mataji immediately asked Kirtanananda to capture the tune and he did so. We all know that Kirtanananda Brahmananda was at once the custodian and distributor of this perennial flow of perfect music which would flood the Ashram atmosphere. During the observance of the *Samyama* week his resonant rendering of the hymnal song, "Hé Pitah" (O Father) etc." seemed to pierce through the ears of the votaries of the function and touch their heart.

Rectitude, straightforwardness and purity marked out Brahmanandaji as one who pursued the noblest ideal in life. Among the special features of his character were desirelessness, infinite patience, wonderful capacity for remaining unruffled in the midst of unbearable suffering and absolute surender to Ma in all circumstances, favourable or unfavourable. Ever cheerful and conscientious, Brahmanandaji was loved by all.

Mataji says, he now rests in a state of peace and happiness in the world beyond. And in Her words we seek solace in our grief.

[*Died* : *26th June 1979, Rathayatra.*]

MATRI LILA

(January—August 1979)

The 'Mātri Līlā' that should have appeared last January was published only in the April issue. Therefore we shall try this time to report about Mataji's movements during the last eight months.

Just before X'mas 1978 Mataji came to Bhimpura on the Narmadā river where she enjoyed a fair amount of rest and freedom from crowds. She was supposed to be in *agñāta vāsa* (undisclosed residence). All the same, a handful of western devotees who had come to India for the sole purpose of spending a few days in Mataji's holy presence were allowed to follow Her to this solitary abode. Among them were a couple of American devotees of many years' standing and Arnaud Desjardins, the well-known producer of reilgious films and author of spiritual books who had come from France with his whole family to spend the christmas vacation near Mataji. He and his wife have been coming to Mataji as often as they could for full twenty years, and their children since their infancy. Mr. Desjardins completed his latest book, called "Au dela du moi" (Beyoud the Iness), while in Bhimpura and dedicated it to Mataji. Her coloured photo adorns the cover.

At Bhimpura Ma hardly left Her small room. She gave darśana in the evenings, sitting near the window while every one gathered on the adjoining terrace. On *Sankranti* day (January 14th) *griha praveśa* (house opening ceremony) was performed of a new cottage for Mataji that had been constructed by some local devotees. Padmanabha pūjā was celebrated and *Daridra Nārāyaṇas* (the Lord in the guise of the poor) were entertained to a feast.

On January 15th, Mataji arrived in Poona where Her large party had been waiting for Her return impatiently for over three weeks. A number of functions followed one another in quick succession throughout Mataji's stay. From Jan. 18th to 22nd, one hundred *Durgā Sapta Śatis*[1] were recited by sixteen pandits specially summoned from Varanasi as arranged by Sri B. K. Shah and again from 24th to 28th another hundred *Candis* at the request of the Maharaja of Bhavnagar. Sri Nagpal started a nine days' recitation of the whole of the Rāmāyaṇa on the 23rd. On February 1st *Vāsantī Panchamī* (Sarasvati Pūjā) was celebrated and some boys from Calcutta were invested with their sacred threads that day. A new statue of Sri Radha was installed in the Ashram Krishna temple in Mataji's presence. The devotees of Poona are well-known for their discipline and great consideration for Ma's convenience and Her health, for which all concerned are really grateful.

On February 7th, Ma proceeded to Bombay where She stayed in Vile Parle for a couple of days, leaving on the 10th for Vrindaban. After about a week there, She paid a short visit to Delhi and reached Kankhal on February 21st. On the 25th *Mahāśivarātri Pūjā* was celebrated by a large number of devotees that were sitting in circles round Śiva linga in the spacious hall. A few western devotees, who had, like everyone else who wished to join the pūjā, fasted the whole day without water, did their worship at the far end of the hall. Mataji came to the hall already at about 5 p.m. and remained until about 11 p m. when the 2nd pūjā was completed. She returned in the small hours of the morning and at the end of the all-night function distributed *prasāda* to everyone with Her own hands. Even while in Her room, Mataji did not sleep that whole night, being occupied with one thing or another till about 10 a m. when She was taken upstairs to rest. That same evening (26th), She boarded the train to Hardoi and from there motored to Naimiṣāraṇya on the 27th early morning. Naimiṣāraṇya is a peaceful and congenial place. Devotees came for Mataji's darśana from Sitapur, Lucknow and other places in the vicinity. Among them were the two daughters of Prof. Ashutosh Bhattacharya, the first secretary of the Sangha who was very ill in Lucknow. He had been bed-ridden for some time. Since it was impossible to bring him to Naimiṣāraṇya to Mataji, *karuṇāmayi*[1] Ma quite unexpectedly came to his residence on March 6th on Her way to Lucknow station from where She boarded the Agra Express to Mathura en route to Vrindaban. Ashuda was carried to the porch, of his house for what proved to be his last darśana of ever gracious Ma who blessed him by Her touch. He was overwhelmed with bliss and gratitude. He had been a faithful devotee for many years and had done much service. He passed away at the age of 78 on a most auspicious day, Buddha pūrṇimā, May 11th which is also one of the main days of Mataji's birthday celebrations. May he rest in peace and bliss at the feet of the Lord.

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[1] *Durgā Saptaśatī* or *Caṇḍi* or *Devi Māhātmya* is a sacred test dealing with the descent of the Divine Śakti to conquer evil forces.

Ma arrived in Vrindaban on March 7th. Holi was celebrated there in great style from 13th to 15th. 108 Vaiṣṇava kirtanias with their Śrikhols[1] had been summoned to Vrindaban from Bengal. A similar celebration had been arranged by the jaipuria family in Ghaziabad in Mataji's presence in 1973. This time it was also sponsored by them. Wonderful kirtan was performed circumambulating round a circular alter (*mancha*) in our spacious Ashram hall for 3 days and nights singing the Mahāmantra in ever-changing rāgas. Needless to say a large number of devotees had arrived, not only from nearly Delhi but also from Calcutta, Bombay and other distant places to take part in this inspiring celebration. During the last night there was ladies kirtan led by Km. Chhabi Banerji. Ma came to the hall after midnight and Herself sang for sometime, walking round gracefully with the singers, quite oblivious of Her arthritic knees. Everyone was electrified and in great *bhāva.* At about 3 a.m. Mataji came again and remained sitting in the hall till 5 a.m. when the men took over. The kirtan singers were wide awake, singing, walking round and playing their cymbals and drums enthusiastically throughout the night never sitting down to rest. Mataji afterwards remarked that the kirtana had been quite unique. The presence of Mahaprabhu Śri Chaitanya Deva, whose birthday falls on the Holi festival, was felt palpably.

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[1] Permeated by compassion.

Thakur Śri Sitaram Omkarnath, the great Mahātmā who is Ma's senior by several years came on the 14th for Ma's darśana. He stayed in our Ashram over night and together with Mataji was present the next midday when *bhoga,*[2] *Pūjā, ārati* of the neatly laid out. 108 Śrikhols was performed with much

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1. *Śrikhol* Drum used for kirtana.
2. *Bhoga* food offering.

pervour and enthusiasm. There was also *nagar* kirtan round part of Vrindaban.

This year Mataji even played Holi. She sat on the platform in the open between Her house and the hall and. armed with a syringe and a few buckets fiilled with red and yellow water, and squirted coloured water on every one who approached Her.

On March 16th Ma motored to Delhi from where She boarded the train to Allahabad the same night. On the 18th She went on to Vindhyachal for a much needed rest. On April 1st Mataji arrived at Varanasi where Vāsanti Pūjā (Durgā Pūjā in spring) was celebrated from 2nd to 7th in our Ashram. Sri Bhola pandit, the officiating priest, was blessed with Ma's presence in the *Caṇḍi Mandap* daily throughout the worship. Any number of other functions were crowded into those few days: The outdoor section of the hospital was reopened. The grandsons of a very old devotee received their sacred threads. Brahmachari Kanu started his *puraścharaṇa* of Gāyatrī mantra. Some new rooms for girl acāryas on the fourth floor of the Kanyapeeth ware ceremonially opened. Ma was carried up and down the four flights in a chair.

On April 9th Ma left Varanasi for Kankhal where She alighted on the 10th early morning. A Vedanta Sammelan was starting that very day at the Śri Krishna Nivās Ashram, Kankhal where Mataji's birthday had been celebrated last year. As this year was the Silver Jubilee of the Sammelan, Mahamandaleś-wara Swami Purnanandaji had urgently requsted Mataji to preside over the opening session. Mataji was present at the gatherings every afternoon for some time from 10th to 13th April. On the first day She sat for full three hours in the dais of the tightly packed pandal in spite of Her indifferent health. A short speech by Mataji was read out by Brahmachari Nirmalananda. Towards the end of the satsang Ma was persuaded to sing for a few minutes. On returning to our Ashram Ma forgot Her fatigue and gave darśana to all who had been waiting patiently for Her for hours.

On April 14th the anniversary of Didima's samnyāsa utsava was, as every year, observed in great style with kirtana, satsang and a feast for mahātmās and all present.

A new cottage for Ma was opened in Her presence. Mataji stayed in it most of the time. Hitherto She had occupied very small rooms alternately in the old Ashram and in the new building adjoining the hall The new cottage is much more comfortable and secluded. It has a large veranda where Ma gives darśana on ordinary days. During festivals of course only the large hall can hold the multitude.

Mataji left for New Delhi on the night of April 22nd. There everyone enjoyed long darśanas every evening until the 26th when the preliminary rites started for the consecration of two temples dedicated to Goddess Kālī and to Didima. The image of Kālī is extremely beautiful. It was modeled by an artist in Calcutta who came to Delhi to give the finishing touches. Didima's statue also seems alive. In the night of April 28th *Nāma Yajña* was performed by women devotees led by Km. Chhabi Banerji. The final consecration took place on *Akṣaya Tritīyā*, April 29th. Akṣaya Tritīyā is a most auspicious day on which in 1968 our Gopal Mandir in Varanasi was consecrated, Purāṇa Puruṣa Mandir in Naimiṣāraṇya in 1975, Adi Sankaracharya Mandir in Kankhal in 1978 and a statue of Didima was installed also on that auspicious day in a new Siva Mandir in Varanasi.

In 1974[1], both images were taken in procession round the temples three times before being finally installed. During the installation ceremony of Goddess Kālī one of the Swamis injured his finger which bled profusely. "Kālīmā is taking Her blood sacrifice," remarked someone.

In the morning of May 1st, Mataji boarded the Secunderabad Express. This was Her fifth visit to South India. She was received at Secunderabad station by a large and respectful crowd and Chief Minister Dr. Chenna Reddy took Her by car to his estate near Hyderabad. A simple and beautifully decorated cottage had been specially built for Ma. The roof was made of palm leaves and the place was adorned with images of various deities in South Indian style. Mataji was received at the estate as the Vedas were chanted by South Indian Brahmins in the traditional way. Her Pūjā was performed before She entered Her cottage. Mātri Satsang was held in the evenings on the 2nd and 3rd. A small temple of Hanuman was consecrated in Ma's presence on Dr. Reddy's farm outside the city. Mataji left Hyderabad at about 3 p.m. on May 4th by train and reached Bangalore the next morning.

She had been invited to Bangalore by the Governor of Karnataka, Sri Govind Narain, who is also the President of our Delhi Ashram, and by the Elaya Raja and Rani of Travancore, for her birthday celebrations. A grand reception led by the Governor and some officials was given to Mataji at the station, and then the Governor drove Her to the estate of the Elaya Raja of Travancore who had specially built a beautiful and comfortable house for Mataji and Her attendants for their stay in Bangalore.

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[1] The foundation stone laying for the "Institute for Puranic and Vedic Research and Studies" in Naimiṣaraṇya took place on Akṣaya Tritīyā day in 1977.

The devotees of Bangalore, guided by Sri Govind Narain and the Elaya Raja, had taken immense pains over the preparations for the celebrations. Every detail had been carefully thoughtout and attended to with the utmost ingenuity and efficiency. An extremely beautiful pandal of enormous size to seat several thousands had been erected in the grounds of Maharaja Gondal's palace. Close by a set of rooms had been built for Mataji's use where She could rest at intervals during the day and meet people in private. A veritable battalion of volunteers, ever ready to serve every guest, kept exemplary order in the pandal and guarded Ma's cottage so that nobody unwanted could in trude.

The actual celebrations started on May 8th and were inaugurated by His Holiness Śri Śankarāchārya of Dwaraka Peeth. A most interesting and varied programme had been drawn up for the next eight days. In the mornings Har Govinda's famous Rāsalīlā party from Vrindaban delighted everyone by their charming performances of scenes from Śri Krishna's life. Then followed spirited and brilliant talks by Mahāmandaleśwaras from Hardwar and Riṣikeṣ: Swamis Brahmānanda, Vidyānanda, Prakashānanda, Purnānanda, Chidānanda, Mahant Girdhar Narayan Puri and by other renowned persons, such as four well-known Mahātmās of Udipi Math, a Jain scholar-saint from Śravanbelagula, a monk from the Bangalore Buddhist Society who has known Mataji for many years. In the evenings again discourses as well as high class vocal and instrumental music of various styles—South-Indian, Bengali, Karnaṭaki, Sindhi and others. Km. Chhabi Banerji gave a beautiful recital and Sm. M. S. Subbulaxmi together with her daughter Radhadevi a most inspiring concert. The last and most cherished item of every day's programme was of course 'Mātri Satsang' when Ma replied to questions with Her unique liveliness and spontaneity. On two occasions She sang at the request of Mahātmās. Mataji's ārati was performed mornings and evenings, usually in Her house at the Elaya Raja's estate.

Akhaṇḍa japa[1] was kept up day and night throughout the whole period. Hundred Caṇḍis were chanted from 2nd to 16th May and the Śrimad Bhāgavata recited from 8th to 16th. Ganesh Yajña, Gayatrī Yajña and other Yajña's were performed. Mataji was present for the Pūrṇāhutis[2] of the Yajñas and attended satsang in the pandal daily for several hours. Devotees had gathered from all over India and a few from abroad. Although Mataji was extremely busy, she kept good health and was radiant. Once She followed the invitation of the Governor to Rājbhavan and another day She paid a visit to the Buddhist Society. In the night from 15th to 16th Tithi Pūjā was performed most solemnly and elaborately. A sound film was taken of the function.

On the 16th evening *Nāma yajña* of Mahāmantra was started by our Delhi kirtan party and others. In the night Mataji attended the ladies kirtan for some time. On the 17th evening towards the conclusion of the kirtan, Ma sat in the pandal listening. A charming līlā was enacted spontaneously. A small child suddenly walked up to Ma and received a radiant smile and a flower. Another tiny fellow followed suit and gradually about

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[1] Perpetual repetition of God's Name.

[2] Final offering.

40—50 children from all sides of the pandal, one by one approached Ma who responded with great sweetness to every one of the little Gopals and kumārīs. Finally a mother brought her baby in arms. Then Ma suddenly got up and joined the kirtanias. With raised arms like Mahāprabhu, She sang and danced three rounds with the singers Needless to say the Swamis sitting near Her and other men, even the Governor himself, followed Mataji. She had been carried to the pandal in a chair. But when Ma in *bhāva* Her body is ageless and free from infirmity and She looks and moves like a young girl A wonderful and quite unexpected climax to the birthday celebrations in Bangalore.

That night Mataji boarded the train to Mardas at the invitation of Governor Sri Pabhudas Patwari who received Her at Madras station the next morning. She was taken to Raj Bhavan where a beautiful cottage had been prepared for Her. Sri T. Sadasivan, Sm. M. S. Subbulaxmi and Atmam enthusiastically helped to take care of Mataji. Satsang was held in the morning in a special pandal and in the evening *bhajans* were sung and Mataji replied to questions. She sang "He Bhagavan". Dr. Chenna Reddy came for Ma's darśana. The same night Mataji left for Bhuvaneswar. Due to a severe cyclone in Andhra Pradesh the railway lines were damaged and many trains had to be cancelled. Thus devotees from North India were stranded in Madras in spite of their reservations. Ma Herself requested Her hosts to approach the railway authorities and arrange for special bogies for Calcutta, Delhi, etc., so that by Mataji's grace everyone was able to proceed to their homes within the next few days. The journey of Mataji and Her party took fifty-one hours. They reached Bhuvaneswar at 1.30 a.m. on May 21st. Even at that hour Mataji was met at the station by the Governor of Orissa, Śri Bhagavat Dayal Sharma.

In the afternoon Mataji left by car for Puri; where She remained till June 27th. Mataji had come to Puri after several years. She remained in Her room upstairs and did not descend at all. However, there is a fairly large terrace adjoining Her room where Ma gave darśana. The rest and the bracing sea-breeze proved congenial to Ma's health. She was in a jolly, communicative mood and talked frequently with great animation, reminiscing about olden times. Devotees from Calcutta came by turns to enjoy Mataji's presence in intimate surroundings without crowds or fixed programmes. Our Ashram in Puri is very small and could not give shelter even to the Ashramites who had come with Ma from South India. However, the nearby Bharat Seva Ashram was extremely helpful and provided rooms for many.

The *ratha yātrā* (car festival), when the deities of Jagannath are carried in procession round the city, was celebrated on June 26th.

From Puri Ma went to Jamshedpur, arriving there on the 28th. The next day She proceeded via Chunar to Varanasi where She alighted on the 30th.

On July 1st She left for Hardwar and reached Kankhal on July 2nd early morning. She remained in Kankhal for three weeks. On most days She would give darśana on the veranda of Her house or outside sitting on the porch, sometimes in hushed silence and on occasions talking animatedly about various things of interest. On July 9th *Gurupūrṇimā* was observed. Already a couple of days earlier devotees kept on arriving from Dehradun, Lucknow, Delhi, etc to pay homage to Ma. On the 9th, Mataji started Her day's work at 6 a.m. There was

Gurupūjā in Didima's Mandir, then Vyāsa, Padmanābha and Ten Avataras Pūjā in the railed off portion of our hall. The foundation stone was laid for a new cottage for Ma on the bank of the Ganges opposite the sadhus' building. A small cottage was inaugurated for an old Bengali gentleman. He is Bholanath's nephew Ashu who stayed with Ma and Bholanath in Dacca as a school boy and Ma looked after him. He expressed the desire to spend his old age near the holy river and so this little house was erected for him.

Devotees approached Ma continuously wherevere She was and offered praṇāmas and gifts. Very late in the afternoon Ma retired to Her room for rest but sat in the hall again for quite some time in the evening.

Towards the end of Mataji's sojourn in Kankhal special recitation of the whole Rāmāyaṇa was performed by 30 Pandits and many other men and women. A few years ago Sm. Santosh Panjwani had taken a vow to arrange for 108 Akhaṇḍa Rāmāyaṇa. This was the 108th. Ma attended the *Pūrṇāhuti* (completion) which was performed with great ceremony and distribution of prasāda to all.

On the 21st night Mataji left for Naimiṣāraṇya arriving there the next morning. A meeting of the "Institute for puranic and Vedic Study and Research took place while Ma was there. On the 24th She went by car to Lucknow where She stayed in Her room at the residence of Śri Rameshwar Sahai till the night of the 25th when She left for Vrindaban, arriving there on the 26th July.

On the 27th a Bhāgavata Saptāha started in our Ashram hall. Ma was badly in need of rest, She remained in Her room upstairs, giving darśana in the evening from Her terrace while everyone gazed at Her from down below. *Jhulan* (swing festival) was celebrated from 4th to 7th August. On the last evening Ma was present in the hall for the pūjā and at the end sat on the swing for a short while. She came downstairs again the next morning (*Rakṣā bandhan* day) to receive and distribute *rākhis* (bracelets). Mataji attended *Janmastami* (Śri krishna's birthday) Pūjā in the night of the 14th and also *Nandotsava* (the cowherds celebration of Śri Krishna's advent) the next day.

The following is quoted from a letter to a friend by a young American professor who came to spend three weeks his summer vacation with Mataji.

Vrindaban 22-8-79

"......I have had a beautiful time here with Mother. Since last Saturday Mother has been coming out unto the roof of Her house each day from 7 to 7-30 p.m. to sit with us in meditation. Dr. Sen requested this of Mother and all of us here have been hopeful that it would become a regular feature · ··· The midnight meditation on *Jhulan Pūrṇimā* also took place on the roof of Mother's house. Several minutes after the meditation began, a heavy downpour started which soon had us all soaked to the skin. (A tarpaulin was held over Mother to keep Her dry.)...... I can honestly say that this was one of my best visits to Mother··"

In spite of indifferent health and short darśanas Ma ever gives to everyone with great abundance. With a single glance She can fulfil one's heart's desire.

On August 27th another *Bhāgavata Saptāha* was started.

Mataji is expected to be in Kankhal for Navarātri and Durgā Pūjā in the second half of September, Kālī Pūjā is to be celebrated in Gujrat. The next *Samyam Mahāvrata* is to be observed from October 28th to Nov. 4th in Kurukshetra at the invitation of ex-minister Sri G. L. Nanda.

ASHRAM NEWS

Mata Anandamayee Hospital Reopens

Mata Anandamayee Hospital and Anandamayee Karuṇā (Homoeopathic Dispensary) at Shivala, Varanasi was closed down following a lock-out declared by the Management on 26.4.78 under unavoidable circumstances. We are glad to say that it has been reopened with our Mataji's blessings from the beginning of April this year. Brig. A. K. Ganguli has taken charge of the hospital as its Superintendent and Secretary. The hospital has now become very popular with increasing attendance of patients under a disciplined team of new workers dedicated to the service of the sick under the leadership of Brig. Ganguli.

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Navaratri and Durga Puja were performed at Kankhal. Mataji is expected to be present. Kali Puja is to be celebrated at Gondal, Gujarat.

Samyam Mahavrata will be observed from October 28th to November 4th in Kurukshetra.

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The Publications Division of Shree Shree Anandamayee Charitable Society has been transferred from Varanasi to Calcutta at 31 Ezra Mansions, 10 Government Place, East, Calcutta 700 069. All correspondence regarding Ānanda Vārtā, books, photos, lockets etc. are to be made with the Manager at the above address :

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